



Universidad Nacional Autónoma
de México

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Colegio de Historia

***We Can Do It!*: La contribución de las mujeres desde el *Home Front* y
sus representaciones en la propaganda en los Estados Unidos
durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial (1941-1945)**

TESIS

QUE PARA OBTENER EL TÍTULO DE
LICENCIADA EN HISTORIA

PRESENTA:

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*Women who stepped up
Were measured as citizens
Of the nation, not as women...
This was a people's war,
And everyone was in it.*

Oveta Culp Hobby

*My experience had been of its rules and systems;
now I remembered that the real world was wide, and that a
varied field of hopes and fears, of sensations and excitements,
awaited those who had the courage to go forth into its expanse,
to seek real knowledge of the life amidst its perils.*

Charlotte Brontë

Introducción

As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will always have its fascination.
When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular.
Oscar Wilde

La Segunda Guerra Mundial,¹ después de setenta años de concluida, continúa siendo un tema vigente de estudio y reflexión. No es casual que, como historiadores, continuemos analizando y profundizando en las razones que llevaron al mundo a seis años de exhaustiva lucha, durante los cuales, la matanza de soldados y civiles llegó a sobrepasar en número y consecuencias a los de la Primera Guerra Mundial.² Esto debido a tres razones principales: primero, por los ataques dirigidos directamente hacia la población civil,³ que al final sólo incrementaron las cifras de muertes sin importar el frente en el que se combatiera. Segundo, porque fue un conflicto más polarizado en cuanto al surgimiento de ideologías totalitarias como el fascismo o el nazismo que justificaban sus atrocidades en contra de los gobiernos democráticos o comunistas. Y tercero, por el avance vertiginoso de la ciencia y la tecnología al servicio de la guerra, las cuales ya se habían perfeccionado durante la PGM.⁴

La SGM inició en septiembre de 1939, con la invasión alemana a los territorios de Polonia. Las causas desencadenantes del conflicto fueron múltiples y, en gran medida, fueron herencia de la PGM. Éstas van desde las ambiciones políticas hasta las ansias de poder económico, desde los deseos por el dominio global hasta la búsqueda del triunfo de las ideologías por sobre todas las cosas, como fue el caso de Benito Mussolini y Adolf Hitler, quienes conformarían el Eje Roma-Berlín a partir de 1936. Después de la invasión a Polonia por la Alemania nazi, las declaraciones de guerra del Reino Unido y Francia, no se hicieron esperar. Durante los primeros dos años de guerra, Francia, los Países Bajos, Noruega y Bélgica fueron de los primeros territorios en caer bajo el control alemán gracias a la *Blitzkrieg* (guerra relámpago), una táctica ofensiva implementada y perfeccionada por los alemanes desde la PGM. La rápida ocupación de gran parte de Europa por la *Wehrmacht* (el ejército alemán) aisló al Reino Unido en su pelea contra Alemania en lo que se conoce como la “Batalla de Inglaterra”. Italia, mientras tanto, invadiría y ocuparía territorios del Mediterráneo y África del Norte. Más adelante, Japón también formaría parte de “las potencias que la historia

¹ En adelante y como abreviatura utilizaremos SGM para referirnos a la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

² En adelante y como abreviatura utilizaremos PGM para referirnos a la Primera Guerra Mundial.

³ Williamson Murray y Allan R. Millet, *La guerra que había que ganar.*, p. 9.

⁴ *Ídem.*, p. 34.

llamaría el Eje”⁵ y participaría en la guerra a partir de 1941, el año en el que atacaría la base militar estadounidense de Pearl Harbor. Sin embargo, la entrada de los Estados Unidos en la SGM y el fracaso de la invasión alemana a territorio soviético, provocarían que el Eje comenzara a verse progresivamente cerrado por los aliados. El éxito de la ofensiva aliada iniciaría con los triunfos en las batallas de El Alamein en el frente africano; Guadalcanal en el frente del Pacífico; Stalingrado en el frente oriental, y Montecassino en el frente del Mediterráneo que haría caer la Italia fascista en 1944. Finalmente, el Día D, como se le conoce al desembarco aliado en Normandía, y la reconquista del Mar de Filipinas marcarían el inicio del fin para los ejércitos y marinas alemanes y japoneses, respectivamente. En abril de 1945, Berlín se encontraba asediada por los soviéticos en el oriente y por los ejércitos estadounidenses y británico por el occidente. Los alemanes terminaron rindiéndose en mayo del mismo año, después de que Adolf Hitler y muchos de los altos mandos del Tercer Reich se suicidaran, fueran capturados o huyeran. La guerra culminaría finalmente en agosto, con la detonación de las bombas atómicas en las ciudades japonesas de Hiroshima y Nagasaki, acontecimientos que obligarían a la rendición incondicional del Imperio de Japón.

Las causas y consecuencias de la SGM aún se estudian actualmente. Se trata de un conflicto que cambió para siempre la faz del mundo. Los temas de estudio que ha generado tocan esferas que van de lo político y lo socioeconómico, hasta lo cultural y lo psicológico, pasando por lo científico y lo militar. Estos estudios son variados: historias generales de tono épico, descripciones de las batallas más importantes, biografías de las personalidades políticas y militares más destacadas, etc. Sin embargo, existen también estudios que se acercan a aquellos personajes menos famosos en comparación con las grandes figuras de la guerra -es decir, los líderes políticos y militares-, los cuales buscan dar a conocer y recuperar la importancia de las que hasta hace unos años eran las voces olvidadas de tan importante suceso: historias de la supervivencia cotidiana durante la guerra en los diferentes frentes, las historias personales de soldados y enfermeras, de niños y madres solitarias, de partisanos y prostitutas, de animales de carga y de compañía doméstica, etc.⁶

⁵ *Ídem.*, pp. 10, 33.

⁶ Para las historias de supervivencia o de la vida cotidiana de soldados, enfermeras, trabajadores de fábrica, etc., durante la guerra existe el archivo en línea *WW2 People's War. An Archive of World War Two Memories*. Un repositorio de historias enviadas por el público recopiladas por la BBC entre junio de 2003 y enero de 2006; cuenta con 47,000 historias y 15,000 imágenes donas por la gente que participó en la guerra y sus familias, *Vide*: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/>.

Vide para el tema de los niños durante la guerra: Laurel Holliday. *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries*. New York: Pocket Books, 1995. 409 p., ils, maps. Lisa L. Olsen. *The Forgotten Generation:*

En México, la historia tangencial sobre la SGM ha sido resultado de la reducida participación mexicana. Además, los estudios, investigaciones y publicaciones que la abordan son escasos y los que existen, en su mayoría, resultan ser estudios monográficos o investigaciones sobre el desarrollo de la política exterior de nuestro país con los países involucrados en el conflicto, tales como los Estados Unidos, Alemania, el Reino Unido, Francia, Japón, etc. Existen investigaciones, por ejemplo, que se interesan en la forma en la que México acogió a las víctimas de la guerra en Europa, sobre el tratamiento de los ciudadanos alemanes y japoneses radicados en México, de cómo fue la participación militar de México en el conflicto o, estrictamente, de cómo influyó la guerra en los ámbitos político, económico y cultural mexicanos.⁷

En cambio, esta investigación nace principalmente de un interés personal que desde la Historia Cultural busca explicar las consecuencias que tuvo la SGM particularmente para las mujeres. Por ello, al enfocarme en el sector femenino de la población estadounidense, pude acercarme particularmente a la famosa figura de “Rosie the Riveter”. En un primer momento, me interesó saber cuál era la historia de esta imagen propagandística. Hasta entonces desconocía lo vasta que resulta la propaganda de guerra estadounidense y el papel de la mujer en el conflicto armado. Con el tiempo pude encontrar más imágenes de propaganda que representaban a las mujeres llevando a cabo otra clase de tareas para apoyar el esfuerzo bélico en el *home front* estadounidense,⁸ además de las fabriles que

American Children and World War II. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011. 174 p., ils. Wolfgang W.E. Samuel. *The War of Our Childhood: Memories of World War II*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002. 356 p., ils.

Vide para el tema de la prostitución y la sexualidad durante la SGM: Yoshiaki Yoshimi y Suzanne G. O'Brien. *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military during World War II*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. 253 p. (Asian Perspectives). Mary Louise Roberts. *What Soldiers Do. Sex and the American GI in World War II France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. 351 p., ils.

Vide para el tema de la participación de partisanos en la guerra: Loenid D. Grenkevich y David M. Glantz. *The Soviet Partisan Movement, 1941-1944: A Critical Historiographical Analysis*. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999. 368 p., ils. (Cass Series on Soviet (Russian) Military Experience, 4).

⁷ Sobre el tema de los alemanes y los japoneses en México durante la guerra Vide: Carlos Inclán Fuentes. *Perote y nazis: las políticas de control y vigilancia del estado mexicano a los ciudadanos alemanes durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial (1939-1946)*. México D.F., Xalapa: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 2013. 249 p., ils. (Colección La Pluralidad Cultural en México, 34) y Sergio Hernández Galindo. *La Guerra contra los japoneses en México durante la segunda guerra mundial: Kiso Tsuru y Masao Imuro, migrantes vigilados*. México D.F.: Ítaca, 2011. 160 p., ils.

Sobre la política exterior mexicana durante este periodo Vide: Rafael Velázquez Flores. *La política exterior de México durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial*. México D.F.: Plaza y Valdés, 2007. 205 p y Blanca Torres Ramírez. *México en la Segunda Guerra Mundial*. México: El Colegio de México, 1979. 382 p.

⁸ Conceptos como “esfuerzo bélico o de guerra”, y *home front* serán de gran importancia a lo largo de esta tesis, por lo que cabe aclarar que no debe considerárseles como sinónimos sino como dos conceptos distintos pero que están íntimamente ligados. “Esfuerzo bélico o de guerra” (en inglés, *war effort*) eran las actividades y trabajos que se crearon en favor de la causa de la victoria; entre ellos estaban los trabajos en las fábricas, las

representaba *Rosie*. Todo ello me condujo finalmente a reparar en la rica aportación de un amplio número de estas mujeres al esfuerzo de guerra, lo cual estimuló entonces mi interés académico por estudiarlas más a fondo.

El objetivo primordial de mi investigación es el estudio de la propaganda estadounidense, la cual estaba dirigida al reclutamiento militar y al menosprecio y denostación del bando enemigo. Sin embargo, la propaganda también estaba dirigida a concientizar y lograr el apoyo desde el *home front* a favor de la causa: la compra de bonos de guerra; la incorporación de mano de obra en fábricas de armamentos, uniformes o alimentos enlatados; el reclutamiento en los programas de defensa y protección civiles o en la Cruz Roja; la promoción de la participación en el voluntariado o en las reservas del ejército, entre otros. No deben olvidarse las campañas de higiene y cuidado de la salud pública (especialmente frente a las enfermedades venéreas) y la prevención del espionaje. La propaganda de guerra se encontraba en todas partes: revistas, periódicos y carteles, películas, programas de radio y discos de música. El gobierno estadounidense y su agencia de propaganda, la Oficina de Información de Guerra,⁹ reconocían que para acelerar la victoria era fundamental la participación de los civiles desde casa sin importar su género, etnia, religión, profesión o condición económica simplemente porque todos tenían algo en común: la necesidad de contribuir al esfuerzo de guerra y, por ende, a la victoria.¹⁰

Conviene detenerse aquí para recordar que el término propaganda proviene del latín *propaganda* “que ha de ser propagado”. Sin embargo, términos como *propaganda* o como *home front*, no caben exclusivamente en una sola y rigurosa definición porque dependen del contexto en el que se desenvuelven. Comúnmente, cuando se piensa en propaganda y en lo que significa, las palabras “persuasión” y “manipulación” parecen provenir siempre inherentes a ella. Persuasión y manipulación de conciencias, de opiniones y de la mente porque la propaganda de cualquier tipo (política, comercial, social) es considerada capaz de influir en

campañas de racionamiento, etc. *Home front* (el frente doméstico) es un concepto del que se ampliará en el punto 1.3 del capítulo 1 de esta investigación.

⁹ La Oficina de Información de Guerra (*OWI*, por sus siglas en inglés: *Office of War Information*), fue creada por orden ejecutiva del presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt en junio de 1942. Se encargó de conjuntar los deberes de distintas agencias y oficinas ya existentes en una sola que se encargaría de varias tareas, entre ellas de formular contenidos informativos en los diferentes medios de comunicación (radio, cine, prensa, etc.) para su difusión interna y externa a los Estados Unidos; analizar mediante la recopilación de datos e información acerca del esfuerzo de guerra para la forma adecuada de distribuir esa información y mantener a la sociedad adecuadamente informada; revisar y aprobar todos los contenidos que el gobierno producía para la radio y el cine; entre otras funciones. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16273> [Consulta 9/07/14] De ahora en adelante, nos referiremos a la Oficina de Información de Guerra como OIG.

¹⁰ George H. Roeder, *The Censored War. American Visual Experience during World War Two*, p. 44.

los patrones de conducta, acondicionando los valores, la toma de decisiones, sirviendo a los propósitos de quienes la crean con la intención de influir en la opinión pública, adoctrinando y provocando emociones. Harold Lasswell, estudioso estadounidense de la comunicación, afirmaba que la propaganda “se interesa en el manejo de opiniones y actitudes a través de la manipulación directa de la sugestión social más que por medio de la alteración de otras condiciones en el entorno o en el organismo.”¹¹ Hay que señalar que Lasswell en su tiempo se ocupó de analizar la propaganda de la PGM, interesándose por la forma en la que se originaron las agencias o ministerios de propaganda en los países involucrados, así como en las técnicas y los medios que fueron utilizados para justificar, alentar, reclutar y promover el espíritu bélico. Laswell mostró particular interés en dos aspectos: primero en las tareas que se le presentaron repentinamente al experto en propaganda en un contexto en el que el flujo de difusión dedicada a la guerra era casi escaso, y segundo, en el papel que jugó la prensa como instrumento fundamental de la propaganda. Muchas de sus conclusiones respecto a la propaganda de la PGM resultaron aplicables para la SGM e incluso para las guerras actuales. La más importante de ellas es la que se refiere a la idea de que la propaganda viene a representar una especie de nuevo poder con el cual se puede implementar el ataque y disminuir la moral del enemigo:

Propaganda es uno de los tres instrumentos principales para las operaciones en contra de un enemigo beligerante: presión militar [el poder coactivo de las fuerzas terrestres, marítimas y aéreas]. Presión económica [interferencia en el acceso a recursos materiales, mercados, capital y mano de obra]. Propaganda [uso directo de la sugestión].¹²

Esta idea ya había sido manejada con anterioridad por el historiador y periodista británico Wickham Steed. Él consideraba la propaganda como el quinto brazo dentro del esfuerzo bélico, acompañando y complementando los poderes militares del ejército, la marina, la fuerza aérea y los poderes de la manipulación económica.¹³ Para Steed, la propaganda y su influencia eran tan poderosas como los disparos de armas en los campos de batalla. Sin duda alguna la propaganda es considerada como un producto del ingenio y de la creatividad pero que, en ocasiones, al salirse de control, podía terminar por ser el

¹¹ Harold D. Lasswell. *Propaganda Technique in World War I.*, p. 8. “is concerned with the management of opinions and attitudes by the direct manipulation of social suggestion rather than by altering other conditions in the environment or in the organism.” Traducción de la autora. (en adelante se usaran las siglas T. A. cuando sea el caso)

¹² *Idem.*, p. 9. “Propaganda is one of the three chief implements of operation against a belligerent enemy: Military pressure [the coercive power of the land, sea and air forces]. Economic pressure [interference with access to sources of material, markets, capital and labor power]. Propaganda [direct use of suggestion]”. T. A.

¹³ Simon J. Potter. *Broadcasting Empire. The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970.*, p. 110.

resultado del lado oscuro y siniestro de la creación humana. El temor de que en algún momento la creación se torna en contra de su creador:

Las imágenes, como las historias y las tecnologías, son creaciones nuestras, y sin embargo, se suele pensar que están “fuera de nuestro control”, o por lo menos fuera del control de “alguien” [las cuestiones de agencia y de poder son cruciales para el funcionamiento de las imágenes]. Es por eso por lo que un libro comienza preguntándose cómo imaginar la teoría, acaba reflexionando sobre la relación entre las imágenes y el poder: los poderes del realismo y la ilusión, de la publicidad de masas y de la propaganda. Trata de especificar la relación entre las imágenes y el discurso, entendida, entre otras cosas, como una relación de poder.¹⁴

A la propaganda se la relaciona invariablemente con la publicidad y los medios de comunicación porque de la primera toma prestadas sus técnicas y de los segundos se beneficia gracias al alcance y aceptación que los medios tienen entre las personas para quienes esa propaganda está dirigida, lo cual termina resultando en una confusión entre los términos.

Asimismo, la propaganda, al apoyarse en artistas para crear imágenes, símbolos, íconos que perduren e influyan, también termina provocando una confusión entre lo que se considera como mera propaganda y lo que se considera como arte. Todo lo cual puede originar una pregunta acerca de los empleos del arte dentro de la propaganda: ¿está el arte al servicio de la propaganda o viceversa? Las líneas que dividían las imágenes de “alta categoría” como se le consideraba al arte y su código estético, y las de “baja categoría” como se le consideraba a las provenientes de la propaganda, comenzaron a difuminarse poco a poco.¹⁵ En los casos particulares de Italia y Alemania, donde se buscó integrar el arte y la propaganda pero sin desaparecer las líneas que los dividían como una creación “alta” y una “baja”, para lograr así el adoctrinamiento de las masas de una forma efectiva y rápida que complementara el discurso ideológico porque “la propaganda, como tampoco el arte, no tenía por lo general el cometido de engañar a nadie; no enmascaraban ni maquillaban nada: tanto la una como el otro tenían la misión, mucho más radical, de *transformar heroicamente lo real*.”¹⁶

Ahora bien, en lo que se refiere a la propaganda que surgió durante la SGM, suele pensarse únicamente en la propaganda nazi y en la maestría de Joseph Goebbels para levantar una impresionante máquina de persuasión en torno a la figura de Adolf Hitler. Esto

¹⁴ W.J.T. Mitchell. *Teoría de la imagen*, p. 13.

¹⁵ Laura Malvano. “El mito de la juventud a través de la imagen: el fascismo italiano”. En: Giovanni Levi y Jean-Claude Schmitt, eds. *Historia de los jóvenes. La edad contemporánea*, p. 315.

¹⁶ *Ídem.*, p. 369.

ilustra la creencia de que la propaganda surge y resulta únicamente exitosa en un régimen de represión y fanatismo como el nazismo, y que es poco probable que en una democracia como la estadounidense se dé el caso de que una campaña de propaganda tenga los mismos resultados. Se tiende a hacer una clara diferencia entre la propaganda de un régimen represor con la de una democracia y se afirma que la primera siempre funciona y la segunda es más poco probable que funcione porque la democracia es más abierta. Sin embargo, el caso de la propaganda estadounidense por supuesto que fue exitoso porque atrajo y convenció a una sociedad entera de entrar a un conflicto que en gran medida no quería ni buscaba. Fue exitoso porque convenció a la sociedad de que existía un enemigo, una amenaza, y porque la movilizó como nunca antes, apremiando a la gente en la importancia de la participación y preparándola para la clase de sacrificios que vendrían.

Con el avance del periodo de guerra y como resultado del llamado a filas principalmente de varones que dejaban atrás a sus familias y puestos de trabajo, buena parte de esta propaganda se dirigió a las mujeres: se tenía necesidad de mano de obra sustituta. Por ello, buena parte del flujo constante de producción y recepción de imágenes de propaganda en el frente doméstico -carteles, canciones y películas- estuvo dirigida hacia el público femenino. Se pretendía motivar su incorporación a las muchas tareas, trabajos y actividades que se crearon para apoyar la causa.

Por ende, la presente investigación se concentra en las diferentes formas en la que la mujer estadounidense participó en el esfuerzo de guerra, así como en la forma en la que fueron representadas en la propaganda de los Estados Unidos. Se buscará comprobar si las representaciones propagandísticas de la SGM influyeron de alguna forma en el cambio de papeles tradicionales de género durante y después del conflicto armado.¹⁷ Para ello, nos acercamos a la comprensión de los aspectos generales de la propaganda y de las diferentes representaciones visuales de la mujer que nacieron en los primeros años del siglo XX, específicamente durante la PGM hasta la década de los años treinta. Estas eran imágenes que la mostraban en esos papeles tradicionales que luego serían repetidos durante la SGM como madres, novias o esposas de los soldados, pero también como enfermeras. Sin embargo, con el inicio de la guerra se le sumaron nuevas imágenes: como militares u obreras en diversas fábricas. “Rosie the Riveter”, por ejemplo, fue una representación que sobresalió de entre todas y que, si bien nació como una mera imagen propagandística, con el paso del

¹⁷ De ahora en adelante, cuando se hable de “papeles”, serán precisamente los “papeles de género”.

tiempo se convirtió en un símbolo femenino de la cultura popular estadounidense. En una representación de una mujer capaz de asumir cualquier tipo de trabajo fuera en tiempos de guerra o de paz. En nuestros días, se le ha dado un estatus de ícono feminista que busca englobar las ideas de que todas las mujeres, independientemente de su etnia, condición socioeconómica y nacionalidad son capaces y dignas de la igualdad. Durante la SGM, la representación de la feminidad¹⁸ se acentuó incorporando en las imágenes propagandísticas rostros maquillados, pestañas acentuadas, labios pintados y cabelleras bien peinadas y cepilladas. Estas eran características que pretendían resaltar el concepto de que trabajar a favor del esfuerzo de guerra no estaba peleado con el ideal de belleza y el glamour que siempre ha estado asociado a la mujer.¹⁹

Así pues, esta investigación tiene como objetivo estudiar los papeles de la mujer desempeñados durante la guerra y la forma en la que fueron representados en la propaganda, interesándose particularmente en las transformaciones al papel tradicional de la mujer dentro de la sociedad estadounidense. La propaganda estadounidense, como se mencionó, se apoyó en varias de las expresiones culturales y medios de comunicación más populares de los Estados Unidos, entre ellos: el cine, la radio, las revistas, los periódicos y los carteles. Si bien se busca dar un lugar a cada uno de ellos en esta investigación, son los carteles los que resultan de particular importancia para la realización de la misma. El interés en las imágenes de los carteles resulta relevante para comprender las representaciones de la mujer que se buscaban esparcir antes y durante la guerra. La elección de los carteles que aparecen en el siguiente capítulo responde a un criterio basado en los distintos sectores en los que la mujer participó desde la PGM hasta la SGM. Se consideró también que fueran el resultado de las campañas de propaganda que prepararon las oficinas de guerra para cubrir las necesidades en el *home front*. La unión de la imagen y el texto en los carteles viene a representar lo que W.J.T. Mitchell explica como el giro pictorial, el cual:

Se trata más de un redescubrimiento poslingüístico de la imagen como un complejo juego entre la visualidad, los aparatos, las instituciones, los discursos, los cuerpos y la figuralidad. Es el descubrimiento de que la actividad del espectador [la visión, la mirada, el vistazo, las prácticas de observación, vigilancia y placer visual] puede constituir un problema tan profundo como las varias formas de lectura [desciframiento, decodificación, interpretación, etc.] y que

¹⁸ Entendiendo el concepto de feminidad como lo que Betty Friedan llamó la “mística de la feminidad”, es decir, lo esencialmente femenino. Esto no es otra cosa más que las construcciones u hormas morales de las que están llenas las revistas y la publicidad dirigida específicamente hacia la mujer con las cuales se pretende que la mujer se identifique en algún momento de su vida y que a partir de ellas llegue a moldear su vida y su comportamiento en la sociedad.

¹⁹ Sherna Berger Gluck. *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change*, p. 11.

puede que no sea posible explicar la experiencia visual, o el 'alfabetismo visual', basándose sólo en un modelo textual.²⁰

Dentro de los parámetros de la Historia Cultural, se logró unificar las temáticas tanto del análisis de las imágenes como las de los estudios de género, más que nada para comprender las representaciones visuales y el desarrollo del papel de la mujer dentro de la sociedad occidental pero también, para lograr responder a las preguntas y alcanzar los objetivos a los que se pretendía llegar con esta investigación.

En el primer capítulo se lleva a cabo un recorrido por los antecedentes y por el contexto socioeconómico de los Estados Unidos en los años anteriores a su participación en la SGM. Este breve recorrido servirá para comprender, en particular, la necesidad de utilizar la propaganda como una herramienta de convencimiento que precisamente buscaba persuadir a la sociedad estadounidense, recelosa de la guerra, de la necesidad de involucrarse en ella. Además de conocer las condiciones en las que Estados Unidos llegaba a la guerra. Es decir, las opiniones de la sociedad y el gobierno respecto a ella, las condiciones de su ejército, los alcances de su economía y la forma en la que manejó su política exterior en el contexto bélico. De igual forma, se incluye un breve contexto cultural con el fin de conocer los principales medios de comunicación que una vez declarada la guerra serían empleados como instrumentos propagandísticos, asimismo se busca desarrollar la idea de la influencia que tuvo la guerra en la cultura estadounidense. Finalmente, se explora el concepto de *home front*, es decir, el concepto de frente doméstico y la importancia que éste tuvo para la guerra, y que puede ser equiparable a los frentes donde se libraban las batallas y se perdían vidas.

El segundo capítulo se divide en dos partes. La primera parte es un recorrido por la primera mitad del siglo XX y los cambios que trajo para la mujer en el ámbito social y personal. Gracias a este recorrido, identifiqué cuatro etapas que moldearon la representación de la mujer y la forma en la que ella se desarrolló dentro de la sociedad: la PGM, los rebeldes y libres años veinte, el retorno a la moral durante los años treinta y, finalmente, la SGM. La segunda parte se concentra ya en lo que fue la propaganda estadounidense dirigida hacia las mujeres, así como en los diferentes campos en los que ellas participaron activamente para fortalecer la causa bélica.

En el tercer y último capítulo analizo la información proporcionada por los testimonios

²⁰ W.J.T. Mitchell. *op. cit.*, p. 23.

orales de mujeres que sirvieron desde el *home front* en las fábricas, en el ejército o en otras actividades a favor del esfuerzo de guerra. Al cotejar los datos de las fuentes bibliográficas y comparándolos con las experiencias de vida de estas mujeres, se buscó hacer un recorrido por la realidad histórica del *home front*: es decir, los aspectos que dificultaron la experiencia bélica de la mujer estadounidense tales como la discriminación, el sexismo, los peligros que implicaban los trabajos y actividades que llevaron a cabo, para así dar cuenta de la experiencia de la guerra para ellas como mujeres, pero también de su experiencia bélica como esposas, madres, hermanas e hijas.

Las fuentes que se emplearon para la realización de esta investigación son, en primera instancia, una amplia bibliografía que toca los temas de principal interés tales como los aspectos de la propaganda en general, la propaganda de la SGM, los estudios de género que se enfocan en la primera mitad del siglo XX y en los estudios acerca de la cultura visual. Esta tesis también se apoya en fuentes hemerográficas, particularmente en una selección de artículos relacionados con la SGM en los números de la revista *Life* que comprenden de marzo de 1941 hasta junio de 1945.²¹ La razón para incluir estos artículos es el carácter fotoperiodístico de la revista, la cual se concentró, desde 1883, en ofrecer una íntima mirada de los diversos aspectos que forman parte de la vida cotidiana del ciudadano estadounidense promedio, publicando fotos donde se muestran cambios y permanencias en la sociedad a lo largo del siglo XX. Un acontecimiento de la magnitud de la SGM no pasó desapercibido para una revista cuyo objetivo principal era la que la unión de la imagen y las palabras. La guerra se convirtió en una parte fundamental de la vida de toda la sociedad estadounidense y entre sus páginas, la revista *Life*, hizo de ella el tema principal. Esto se reflejó en la forma en la que los artículos, la publicidad, las editoriales o las cartas del lector se concentraban únicamente en la guerra.

Otra de las fuentes primordiales de esta investigación fueron los veinticuatro testimonios de mujeres que participaron en actividades relacionadas con el esfuerzo de guerra (Ver Gráfica 11). Diecinueve de estos testimonios fueron recogidos del *Veterans History Project*, un proyecto que forma parte del *American Folklife Center* de la Biblioteca del Congreso de los Estados Unidos. Este proyecto se puso en marcha en el año 2000 con el objetivo de reunir, preservar y hacer accesible los testimonios personales de los veteranos de guerra estadounidenses a partir de la PGM hasta las Guerras de Afganistán e Iraq. Además

²¹ *Vide*: http://books.google.com.mx/books/about/LIFE.html?id=N0EEAAAAMBAJ&redir_esc=y.

de que también se recogen testimonios de civiles estadounidenses que de alguna forma se relacionaron con actividades bélicas. La participación en este proyecto es voluntaria y es patrocinada íntegramente por la Biblioteca del Congreso y el Congreso de los Estados Unidos, además de pequeñas instituciones públicas y privadas que se encargan de recopilar los testimonios y subirlos a la red para su consulta gratuita.²² De estos diecinueve testimonios se llevó a cabo la tarea de transcribir cada uno de ellos, mismos que se incluyen en la sección de “Anexos” para facilitar su consulta. En particular, al momento de traducir los testimonios para incluirlos en el cuerpo del texto, se buscó conservar el lenguaje coloquial con el que estas mujeres respondieron a las interrogantes en sus respectivas entrevistas. Estos testimonios se dividieron en seis categorías que para noviembre del 2014 arrojaron las siguientes cantidades de registros: Mujeres en el sector civil [769], Mujeres en la marina (*WAVES*) [701], Mujeres en el ejército (*WAAC/WAC*) [579], Mujeres piloto (*WASP*) [78], Mujeres en la Reserva de los Marines (*MWCR*) [29] y Mujeres en la Guardia Costera (*SPARS*) [60] (Ver Gráfica 6). De un total de 2,216 registros, se seleccionaron únicamente diecinueve testimonios porque cumplieron con los requisitos que pedí de ellos: accesibilidad al material audiovisual y porque respondieron a las preguntas concernientes a los temas sobre discriminación racial y sexual, a los peligros en el *home front* y al sexismo, a la familia y a la reflexión en torno a la participación en la guerra.

Por otro lado, los cinco testimonios restantes se obtuvieron del libro *Rosie the Riveter Revisited. Women, the War and the Social Change* de Sherna Berger Gluck.²³ La razón por la cual decidí incluir estos cinco testimonios responde a que gracias a ellos pude complementar y cotejar la información y los datos que me proporcionaron los testimonios del *Veterans History Project*. El objetivo de escuchar, ver, leer y transcribir del inglés los testimonios de estas mujeres de distintas etnias, escolaridad, condición social que durante la guerra fueron trabajadoras de fábrica, militares o simplemente realizaron actividades de compromiso civil fue conocer sus historias y sus experiencias, la forma en la que vivieron esos años de guerra y como el conflicto las alcanzó y las afectó en la vida diaria. Asimismo importa recoger su sentir respecto a los papeles cambiantes de la mujer durante y después de la guerra, así como los problemas, dificultades que enfrentaron y las lecciones que les dejaron esos años para el resto de sus vidas. El poder ingresar y consultar bases de datos en línea como la de la revista *Life* y la de las historias orales de la Biblioteca del Congreso,

²² *Vide*: <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>

²³ Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales. Clasificación HD6073.A47 G58.

ayudaron también a recalcar en la importancia de la inclusión y aceptación de este tipo de recursos para las investigaciones históricas.

Capítulo 1. Los Estados Unidos y el *Home Front* en la Segunda Guerra Mundial

War is not choices between good and bad.
War is choices between bad and worse.
Nathaniel Fick

El siglo XX estuvo marcado por sucesos, tales como guerras, crisis económicas, privaciones, desastres naturales, etc., que dieron forma a la sociedad estadounidense.²⁴

El primero de ellos fue la PGM, un conflicto que desangró a Europa y en el cual también participaron los Estados Unidos a partir de 1917. Luego del trauma que significó su breve participación en este conflicto bélico, el país ingresó en un periodo que se asocia con los excesos: los económicos, los sociales, los culturales. Fueron los excesos, los que dieron inicio a lo que F. Scott Fitzgerald llamó la “Era del Jazz” en un pequeño ensayo titulado *Ecos de la Era del Jazz* (1931). Una era que, según el propio escritor, inició luego de los disturbios sindicales de mayo de 1919 y que terminó abruptamente diez años después con el derrumbe del mercado de valores en octubre de 1929. La “Era del Jazz” se caracterizó por el mínimo interés en la política, fue una era de “milagros, fue una era de arte, fue una era de exceso, y fue una era de sátira.”²⁵ Fue la era a la que perteneció una generación desinteresada y hedonista que cayó en cuenta de su propia exuberancia y despilfarro cuando entró en crisis a la par de su economía. Los excesos condujeron al desastre y el desastre tenía que ser solucionado.

Las heridas que la Gran Depresión había provocado no eran solamente económicas sino también sociales y los estadounidenses se aprestaban a enfrentarlas. En su discurso inaugural del 4 de marzo de 1933, el recién electo presidente Roosevelt, se referiría al trabajo conjunto entre ciudadanos y gobierno para sacar adelante una sociedad y una economía en crisis, que él heredaba de la pasada administración. Con optimismo y refiriéndose en todo momento a los valores tradicionales “americanos”. Franklin D. Roosevelt prometía la recuperación y el orden, pidiendo a cambio un voto de confianza que haría posible que su administración saliera adelante en esos momentos de crisis tanto doméstica

²⁴ José Emilio Pacheco, en su poema “Los Vigésimicos”, ilustra con palabras pesimistas, abatidas y brutales el sentimiento que dejó el siglo XX en quienes lo vivieron. El poema toca temas como la angustia, la herencia podrida que el siglo pasado dejó al futuro, nuestro futuro; y más que nada, el tema de la muerte: *Sobre todo matamos. El nuestro fue / el siglo de la muerte*. Sin duda alguna, podemos relacionar el poema del escritor mexicano a esos sucesos que dieron forma a cualquier sociedad durante este siglo: las guerras, el genocidio, la destrucción del entorno y de la humanidad misma.

²⁵ F. Scott Fitzgerald. *Echoes of the Jazz Age*. Vide: <http://pdcrodas.webs.ull.es/anglo/ScottFitzgeraldEchoesOfTheJazzAge.pdf>, p. 2. [Consulta 10/10/13]

como mundial.²⁶

Con estas promesas, Franklin D. Roosevelt se dedicó a impulsar una serie de políticas conocidas como el Nuevo Trato (*New Deal*), las cuales incluían importantes reformas y leyes que a fin de cuentas estimularían la débil economía al mejorar la industria y el ámbito social, lo que ayudaría, en un mediano plazo, a superar la crisis. Este cambio provocó que el estadounidense volviera a recuperar la confianza en su propio gobierno.²⁷ En general, lo que el Nuevo Trato pretendía era brindarle seguridad al ciudadano estadounidense en cada uno de los aspectos que la Gran Depresión había afectado.²⁸ La nueva política se dirigió a atacar a los monopolios en la industria y buscar una participación más activa del gobierno en funciones reguladoras, es decir, que el Estado interviniera más en la economía. Para finales de los años treinta se confiaba en que la mejor forma de asegurar el futuro económico próspero era a través del apoyo en la generación de un mayor consumo. En otras palabras, “que la demanda del consumidor fuera la fuerza que impulsara la producción y la inversión, y no al revés.”²⁹ Sin embargo, la depresión aún no había sido superada completamente y el nuevo desplome económico a finales de 1937 destruiría las esperanzas de alcanzar una economía equilibrada para 1938. Los sueños de los progresistas de alcanzar una economía “corporativista en que las instituciones privadas aprenderían a cooperar en bien del interés público y en que el Estado presidiría, benignamente, una nueva época de desarrollo y progreso”³⁰ eran solamente quimeras.

1.1. Antecedentes y contexto socioeconómico

El contexto socioeconómico y cultural de los Estados Unidos a finales de la década de los años treinta se encontraba claramente enmarcado por la inminente guerra que finalmente se desataría en Europa a principios de septiembre de 1939.

La sociedad se encontraba dividida entre una abrumadora mayoría que se oponía a la entrada del país a un conflicto que se consideraba como un problema exclusivamente del continente europeo y un pequeño sector compuesto más que nada por los grupos de poder

²⁶ Franklin Delano Roosevelt. *First Inaugural Address*. 4 de marzo, 1933. Vide: <http://www.beersandpolitics.com/discursos/franklin-delano-roosevelt/first-inaugural-address/224> [Consulta 25/11/13]

²⁷ Robert M. Crunden. *Introducción a la historia de la cultura norteamericana*, p. 345.

²⁸ David M. Kennedy. *Freedom From Fear. The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, p. 363.

²⁹ Alan Brinkley. “El nuevo trato y la idea del Estado”. En: *Estados Unidos visto por sus historiadores. Tomo 2.*, p. 169.

³⁰ *Ídem*, p. 172.

que consideraban inminente, necesaria la entrada en la guerra y por ende apoyaban abiertamente a los países europeos que luchaban contra la Alemania nazi. Por ese entonces se tenía la idea que el Viejo Continente se encontraba constantemente en guerra y que, por ende, era una situación normal en la que no había que intervenir. Desde el punto de vista de los Estados Unidos, era mejor dejar que la situación siguiera su curso³¹ porque “era inútil para América pensar en solucionar las enemistades internas de Europa, y por eso debemos olvidarnos de ellas.”³² Esta mentalidad con respecto a los problemas de Europa fue un resultado directo de la participación de Estados Unidos en la Gran Guerra,³³ cuyos fantasmas³⁴ y atrocidades aún continuaban frescos en las mentes de quienes participaron en ella como combatientes o no combatientes. La mayoría, si no es que todos los grandes estadistas y oficiales militares de la SGM, habían formado parte del grupo de los combatientes del primer conflicto mundial. Por ello, “la sombra de las matanzas de la Gran Guerra ejercía una influencia poderosa”.³⁵ Solamente habían transcurrido poco más de veinte años desde que el Tratado de Versalles dio por terminado el primer gran conflicto del siglo XX.

Por ello, la sociedad estadounidense, no estaba dispuesta a dejarse arrastrar de nueva cuenta a una lucha y se cuestionó su participación. Las respuestas a preguntas sobre los propósitos sólo encontraban respuestas desesperanzadoras. Se consideraba que la intervención de los Estados Unidos en la Gran Guerra había sido un error que debía evitar

³¹ Ruth Sarles. *A Story of America First: The Men and Women Who Opposed US Intervention in World War II.*, p. 6.

³² Roger Butterfield. “Lindbergh. A stubborn young man of strange ideas becomes a leader of wartime opposition”. En: *Life*. Vol. 11. Agosto 11, 1941., p. 68. “It was hopeless for America to think of solving Europe's internal enmities, and so we must forget them.” T. A. Vide: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=YE0EAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [Consulta 29/01/14]

³³ Como se expuso anteriormente, los Estados Unidos entraron a la PGM hasta 1917. Si bien las cifras de bajas estadounidenses no se pueden comparar con las británicas, las francesas o las alemanas, la experiencia de participar en este conflicto resultó igual de traumática tanto para la generación de jóvenes que lo hicieron como para la sociedad estadounidense en general. Vide: Alan Brinkley. *op. cit.*, p. 172 y Gerd Horten. *Radio Goes to War: the Cultural Politics of Propaganda during World War II.*, p. 16.

³⁴ La idea de los “fantasmas” que dejó la Gran Guerra va más allá del mero significado escabroso y sobrenatural que podría otorgársele. Estudiosos como Jay M. Winter llevan esta idea al ámbito de los estudios de la Historia Cultural, reflexionando sobre el impacto que este conflicto dejó para aquellos que lo vivieron directa o indirectamente. Los “fantasmas” que regresan, sí, como una visión etérea que se levanta de la tumba hacia la memoria colectiva cobra un significado profundo y sensible que el autor trata de encontrar o de ver reflejado en los traumas de los soldados o de sus familias, en la forma de recordar y conmemorar a los caídos, en las muestras culturales que surgieron después de la guerra sobre la guerra misma y en las consecuencias políticas y sociales que en poco más de veinte años volverían a sumergir al mundo en un nuevo enfrentamiento que superaría, por mucho, a los “fantasmas” del primero. Vide: Jay M. Winter. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

³⁵ Williamson Murray y Allan R. Millet. *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.

repetirse pues se le veía como una mera causa perdida porque su intervención en el viejo continente no había servido de nada: “lejos de ser redimida por la intervención americana, Europa rápidamente se deslizó nuevamente hacia sus históricos vicios de autoritarismo y rivalidad armada.”³⁶

Desde la declaración de guerra en 1939 y hasta agosto de 1941, la mayor parte de la sociedad estadounidense que se opuso a la intervención no rebasó el 76 por ciento; sin embargo, a partir de entonces y hasta antes del ataque a Pearl Harbor en diciembre de 1941 aumentó considerablemente al 83 por ciento.³⁷ Este porcentaje estaba conformado por un grupo compuesto por diversos sectores de la sociedad que no necesariamente tenían las mismas ideologías o inclinaciones políticas, tales como:

Los Veteranos de Guerra Protestantes de América, a los Católicos irlandeses-americanos; desde los del medio oeste con una aversión natural a los compromisos europeos, a la gran comunidad italiana impresionada por los logros de Mussolini [...] Otros grupos bien organizados eran los Cruzados Americanos, los Camisas Plateadas y el Frente Cristiano.”³⁸

Este conjunto de grupos era conocido como el de los no-intervencionistas (*non-interventionists*) y lo que tenían en común era, que si bien no eran pacifistas,³⁹ sí abogaban activamente por la no intervención.⁴⁰ Estas agrupaciones consideraban que entrar en la guerra traería consigo problemas económicos, sociales y políticos que se reflejarían a muy corto plazo lo que hundirían a Estados Unidos en una nueva crisis, parecida incluso a la de 1929. Consideraban también que militarmente el país no estaba preparado para combatir con la Alemania de Adolf Hitler, la cual llevaba casi veinte años preparándose militarmente. Además se pensaba que la entrada en la guerra sería sólo un pretexto que beneficiaría solamente a las altas esferas del poder, como las empresas de armamento o los banqueros

³⁶ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 386. "far from being redeemed by American intervention, Europe swiftly slid back into its historic vices of authoritarianism and armed rivalry." T. A.

³⁷ Ruth Sarles. *op. cit.*, p. 71.

³⁸ Anthony Rhodes. *Propaganda, the Art of Persuasion: World War II.*, p. 141. "The Protestant War Veterans of America, to the Catholic Irish-Americans; from Midwesterners with a natural aversion to European commitments, to the large Italian community impressed by Mussolini's achievements [...] Other well-organized groups were the American Crusaders, the Silver Shirts, the Christian Front." T. A.

³⁹ Ruth Sarles. *op., cit.*, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Si hay algo que compartieron el escritor francés Romain Rolland y los no-intervencionistas estadounidenses fue la oposición a la intervención en una guerra a la que no se *necesitaba* entrar. Ciertamente el francés actuó en el contexto de la PGM con una postura pacifista que nunca fue característica de los no-intervencionistas. Sin embargo, Rolland y los grupos no-intervencionistas sí compartían la inquietud de ver a sus países completamente destrozados al finalizar el conflicto. Conviene recordar que Rolland mantuvo la idea de que existían grupos interesados en avivar los conflictos políticos y sociales en favor de la guerra, mismos que en su tiempo fueron los periódicos pro-guerra y los países imperialistas como Rusia, Austria-Hungría y Prusia. Romain Rolland. *Above the battle.* Journal de Genève, Septiembre 15, 1914. Vide: <http://www.knowledgerush.com/gutenberg/3/2/7/7/32779/32779-h/32779-h.htm>. [Consulta 10/02/14]

tal y como había sucedido en la Gran Guerra de 1914.⁴¹

Las preocupaciones que muchos de los no-intervencionistas manifestaban desde mediados de la década de los treinta se unificaron en la creación de una de las organizaciones no-intervencionistas más importantes e influyentes: el *America First Committee*.⁴² Este comité contaba entre sus filas con figuras públicas muy influyentes como el ex presidente Herbert Hoover, el piloto Charles Lindbergh, la actriz de cine Lillian Gish, el ex-embajador del Reino Unido, Joseph P. Kennedy, diversos miembros del Congreso, integrantes de los cuerpos docentes y administrativos de las principales universidades del país. Para este comité la principal razón por la que había que evitar la guerra era que consideraban que ésta “debilitaría a los Estados Unidos y ciertamente colocaría su supervivencia como una república libre en juego.”⁴³

Charles Lindbergh, por ejemplo, considerado un héroe estadounidense⁴⁴ ofreció discursos radiales en numerosas ocasiones desde 1939 y habló ante el Senado y el Comité de Asuntos Exteriores (*House of Foreign Affairs Committee*).⁴⁵ Fue enfático respecto a las condiciones en las que se encontraba la aviación militar estadounidense, sobre las consecuencias que traería la intervención, sobre lo “contradictorias” que resultaban las políticas del gobierno de Franklin D. Roosevelt⁴⁶ respecto a cómo manejar la política exterior y sobre las pesimistas declaraciones sobre el destino del Reino Unido. Estas ideas las dejó en claro en el controvertido discurso que dio en Des Moines, Iowa el 11 de septiembre de 1941:

Cuando las hostilidades comenzaron en Europa, en 1939, estos grupos [los británicos, los judíos y la administración de Roosevelt] se dieron cuenta de que la gente americana no tenía intención de entrar a la guerra. Ellos sabían que sería más que inútil pedirnos una declaración de guerra en ese momento. Pero ellos creían que este país podría entrar a la guerra de la

⁴¹ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 387.

⁴² El *America First Committee* se fundó en el verano de 1940 en la Universidad de Yale por un pequeño grupo de estudiantes, muchos de ellos militares de reserva y no pacifistas, que no rebasaba los doscientos integrantes. El comité se basaba en las tradiciones y valores característicos de los estadounidenses para defender la idea de la no intervención. *Vide*: Ruth Sarles. *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

⁴³ Justus D. Doenecke. “American Isolationism, 1939-1941”. En *The Journal of Libertarian Studies.*, p. 201. “would weaken the United States and indeed place her survival as a free republic in jeopardy.” T. A.

⁴⁴ Lindbergh fue de los miembros más sobresalientes del comité. Contaba con los recursos y el apoyo de gente poderosa en la figura del ex-embajador Kennedy y en la de senadores activos como el de Montana Burton K. Wheeler, el de Dakota del Norte Gerald P. Nye y el de Missouri Bennett Champ Clark. *Vide*: Roger Butterfield. *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴⁵ *Ídem.*, p. 69.

⁴⁶ Era una verdad muy bien conocida que Charles Lindbergh y el presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt mantenían una riña muy particular y privada. El primero tenía la imagen del entonces presidente como una de un político poco sincero, hipócrita y mentiroso. El segundo consideraba al aviador como un derrotista y un traidor en potencia. *Ídem.*, p. 70.

misma manera en la que entramos en la pasada. Ellos planearon: primero, preparar a los Estados Unidos para una guerra extranjera bajo la pretensión de la defensa americana; segundo, involucrarnos en la guerra, paso a paso, sin que nos diéramos cuenta; tercero, crear una serie de incidentes que nos forzarían a entrar en el conflicto real. Estos planes estaban, por supuesto, cubiertos y asistidos por el poder absoluto de su propaganda.⁴⁷

Sin embargo, el porcentaje de personas a favor y en contra de la guerra comenzó a cambiar por lo cual Charles Lindbergh y otros miembros del *America First Committee* serían considerados como antisemitas y simpatizantes de los nazis, enemigos de la administración de Franklin D. Roosevelt, y serían considerados como auténticos villanos por la opinión pública:⁴⁸ a la larga dejarían de ser tomados en cuenta cuando hasta ese entonces eran 'tolerados' porque ejercían su libertad de expresión. Para la segunda mitad de 1941 muchos consideraban la causa del movimiento no-intervencionista como perdida y consideraban que si bien sus miembros no actuaban de una forma intencionalmente anti-patriótica sí se dejaban llevar por su amargura personal, como lo fue el caso de Charles Lindbergh.⁴⁹

El resto de la población, incluidos el propio Roosevelt y su gobierno, pertenecían al sector de la sociedad conocido como los Intervencionistas (*interventionists*),⁵⁰ el cual consideraba importante y necesario, como mínimo, el apoyo a los países europeos que acababan de declarar la guerra a la Alemania nazi, especialmente al Reino Unido, mediante el envío de recursos e infraestructura para apoyar y asegurar el éxito de la defensiva y la resistencia al avance alemán. En este aspecto no estaban muy distanciados de los no-intervencionistas, ya que estos también consideraban importante el apoyo al Reino Unido. Después de la caída de Francia en junio de 1940 con el "Milagro de Dunkirk",⁵¹ fue

⁴⁷ Charles Lindbergh. Discurso de Des Moines. Septiembre 11, 1941. *Vide*: <http://www.charleslinbergh.com/americanfirst/speech.asp> [Consulta 17/11/13]: "When hostilities commenced in Europe, in 1939, it was realized by these groups [British, Jews and the Roosevelt Administration] that the American people had no intention of entering the war. They knew it would be worse than useless to ask us for a declaration of war at that time. But they believed that this country could be entered into the war in very much the same way we were entered into the last one. They planned: first, to prepare the United States for foreign war under the guise of American defense; second, to involve us in the war, step by step, without our realization; third, to create a series of incidents which would force us into the actual conflict. These plans were of course, to be covered and assisted by the full power of their propaganda". T. A.

⁴⁸ Roger Butterfield. *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴⁹ En marzo de 1932, el pequeño hijo de Lindbergh de tan sólo veinte meses de edad fue secuestrado y luego hallado muerto. El caso fue muy público y se le conoció como "El crimen del siglo".

⁵⁰ Los intervencionistas también se unieron en la figura del *Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies*, el cual se creó casi a la par del *America First Committee*. Ruth Sarles. *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁵¹ "El Milagro de Dunkirk" es como se le conoce a la Operación Dynamo o a la Evacuación de Dunkirk que se llevó a cabo entre mayo y junio de 1940. Con Francia ocupada casi en su totalidad por la *Wehrmacht*, miles de soldados de la Fuerza Expedicionaria Británica y del 1er Ejército Francés fueron orillados por el ejército alemán a retirarse al norte, a las costas del Canal de la Mancha. A lo largo de diez días, la Marina Real Británica intentó evacuar lo que quedaba de los diezmados ejércitos que esperaban ser evacuados de las playas francesas mientras eran atacados incesantemente por la *Luftwaffe*. Winston Churchill lo calificó como "el milagro del

únicamente el Reino Unido el que enfrentaría a Alemania directamente y en su territorio. Para muchos su resistencia era la pieza clave porque implicaba la supervivencia del resto de Europa.⁵² La diferencia entre las opiniones de los intervencionistas y las de los no-intervencionistas estaba en la forma en la que Estados Unidos debía brindar ese apoyo a los británicos. Para los primeros, el apoyo significaba enviar no sólo elementos básicos como comida, medicina y combustible, sino también recursos de carácter militar. Para los segundos, el apoyo a los británicos significaba no comprometer los estatutos impuestos por las Actas de Neutralidad⁵³ las cuales fueron aprobadas por el Congreso a lo largo de la década de los años treinta precisamente para mantenerse al margen de futuros conflictos como el que lentamente se gestaba en Europa. El apoyo a las islas británicas, para los No-intervencionistas, tampoco se trataba de otorgar tan libremente los recursos fundamentales para la autodefensa y el sustento de los Estados Unidos.⁵⁴ La ayuda a las islas británicas debía ser limitada y considerando antes que nada las necesidades de Estados Unidos.

En conclusión, la opinión pública en los Estados Unidos entre el inicio de la guerra en Europa y el bombardeo a Pearl Harbor puede catalogarse únicamente como contradictoria y confusa. Joseph P. Kennedy, en un discurso radiofónico que dio todavía como embajador en

rescate". Sin embargo, también argumentó que "las guerras no se ganan con evacuaciones". El resultado de esta evacuación fue el rescate de alrededor de 338,000 soldados pero también en la captura de miles de prisioneros de guerra y la pérdida de enormes cantidades de equipo militar que fue abandonado en las playas. A pesar del "milagro", la realidad es que la operación que pretendía contrarrestar la *Blitzkrieg* en territorio francés fue un rotundo fracaso. *Vide*: Walter Lord. *The Miracle of Dunkirk*. New York: Open Road Media, 2012.

⁵² Para mediados de 1940, el Reino Unido era la última potencia europea que hizo frente al ataque alemán. Me atrevo a llamar a esos largos meses que esta nación pasó enfrentando a la Alemania nazi por su cuenta como la "supervivencia del resto de Europa" porque sin lugar a dudas fue un punto clave y un momento decisivo en el devenir de la SGM. Sin adornos ni exageraciones, las circunstancias que llevaron al fracaso de la Operación León Marino (la invasión alemana a territorio británico) fueron un conjunto de malas decisiones del mando alemán y una admirable resistencia tanto militar como civil de los británicos. Cabe preguntarse cuál hubiese sido el destino de la guerra en el caso de que el Reino Unido se uniera a países como Francia, los Países Bajos, Bélgica, Austria y caer en el control alemán antes del ingreso de los Estados Unidos y de la Unión Soviética a la contienda.

⁵³ En total se aprobaron cuatro Actas de Neutralidad. La primera, aprobada en agosto de 1935, prohibía específicamente exportar armas y municiones a los países que se encontraran en guerra. La segunda fue pasada en febrero de 1936, expiraría hasta mayo del año siguiente y establecía la prohibición de los préstamos a cualquiera de las naciones beligerantes. La tercera se aprobó en 1937 como una respuesta tanto a la situación que acababa de desatarse en España con la Guerra Civil como al crecimiento de los movimientos fascistas, se estableció en ella la prohibición a los ciudadanos estadounidenses de viajar en barcos beligerantes y a los barcos mercantes estadounidenses de transportar armas a los países en guerra; al presidente se le otorgó la autoridad de impedir la entrada de barcos beligerantes a aguas estadounidenses y de igual modo, el poder levantar embargos para permitir la exportación de "materiales y artículos". Finalmente, la cuarta acta aprobada en noviembre de 1939, con la guerra recién iniciada, con la invasión de Polonia y Checoslovaquia en marcha y después de mucho debate en el Congreso, se levantó el embargo de armas pero las prohibiciones a los préstamos y a la transportación de bienes a puertos beligerantes se mantuvo. *Vide*: <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/neutrality-acts>. [Consulta 22/11/13]

⁵⁴ Ruth Sarles. *op. cit.*, p. 8.

el Reino Unido a finales de 1940 y que la revista *Life* transcribió y publicó en el número del 27 de enero de 1941, explica la situación:

Desde mi regreso a casa lo que más me ha impresionado es el creciente conflicto en las mentes de la gente americana acerca de los dos cursos de acción que la mayoría de los americanos defiende -ayudar a Gran Bretaña y permanecer fuera de la guerra-. Están empezando a sentir que estas políticas pueden resultar inconsistentes. Si uno enfatiza la ayuda a Gran Bretaña, por lo tanto pone en riesgo entrar a la guerra. Si se enfatiza evitar la guerra, se minimiza la ayuda a Gran Bretaña. Yo creo que estas políticas pueden ser aplicadas sin confusión y sin riesgo de contradicción. La prueba para cualquier propuesta debería ser- lo que sea mejor para los Estados Unidos de América.⁵⁵

El presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt comenzó a implementar una serie de medidas que parecían preparar al país para la guerra: “enviando tropas americanas a Islandia, colocando a Groenlandia bajo tutela temporal de los Estados Unidos, proclamando una ilimitada emergencia nacional, congelando los bienes japoneses, y prometiendo apoyo americano si Japón atacaba colonias holandesas y británicas en el Pacífico.”⁵⁶ Según los no-intervencionistas, estas disposiciones dejaban muy en claro las contradicciones con las que el gobierno del presidente se manejaba, ya que al llevarlas a cabo incumplía en muchos aspectos con las Actas de Neutralidad.

En casa, la sociedad era tan diversa como contradictoria, era marcada por valores tradicionalistas donde en lo individual “los americanos orientan sus vidas alrededor de creencias religiosas y políticas, prácticas comunitarias, y verdades personales basadas en la experiencia, las cuales podían compartir con muchos pero que los separaban de muchos otros.”⁵⁷ En este contexto, los lugares que ocupaban los afroamericanos y los nativos americanos dentro de ella eran muy reducidos. Minorías como los migrantes japoneses, chinos, latinos, etc., llegaron a los Estados Unidos a lo largo del siglo XIX y durante los primeros años del siglo XX, al igual que irlandeses y europeos del este.

⁵⁵ Joseph P. Kennedy. “Stay out of war”. En: *Life*. Vol. 10. Enero 27, 1941., p. 27. “Since my return home what has impressed me most is the growing conflict in the minds of American people over the two courses of action which the vast majority of Americans advocate—aiding Britain and staying out of war. They are beginning to feel that these policies may prove inconsistent. If one emphasizes aid to Britain, he thereby risks entering the war. If he emphasizes avoidance of war, he minimizes the aid to Britain. I think that these policies can be applied without confusion and without a risk of contradiction. The test for any proposal should be—what its best for the United States of America.” T. A. Vide: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=80gEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [Consulta 20/01/14]

⁵⁶ Justus D. Doenecke. *op. cit.*, p. 211. “sending American troops to Iceland, placing Greenland under temporary United States guardianship, proclaiming an unlimited national emergency, freezing Japan assets, and pledging American support if Japan attacked Dutch or British colonies in the Pacific.” T. A.

⁵⁷ George H. Roeder. *op. cit.*, p. 3. “the Americans orient their lives around religious and political beliefs, community practices, and experientially based personal truths which they may share with many but which separate them from many others.” T. A.

La economía, por otro lado, todavía padecía los efectos de la Gran Depresión y del nuevo desplome de 1937, pero encontraría en la guerra una forma de reactivación sin precedentes lo que convertiría a Estados Unidos en la nueva potencia mundial. En 1939, Estados Unidos no estaba preparado para librar una guerra contra la impresionante maquinaria bélica alemana, quien por ese entonces los superaba en hombres enlistados en las fuerzas armadas, en tanques y aviones, en barcos y submarinos.⁵⁸ Antes de Pearl Harbor, las fuerzas armadas estaban compuestas por “poco menos de 200,000 hombres en la armada, sólo 125,200 en la Marina, y poco menos de 20,000 en los Cuerpos de Marines”⁵⁹ y la situación del desempleo parecía recordar los años de la Depresión con poco más de cinco millones de personas desempleadas para finales de 1939.⁶⁰ Durante los años que duró la SGM, las cifras que reflejaban el limitado desempeño tanto de las fuerzas armadas como de la producción bélica y, por consecuencia, de la economía, aumentarían considerablemente superando por mucho a las de los demás países involucrados en el conflicto. A pesar de que se considera esta reactivación y movilización económicas como una especie de “milagro”⁶¹ dadas las condiciones en las que se encontraba la industria y capital estadounidenses “que se habían deteriorado durante toda una década”,⁶² en realidad hubo varios factores que favorecieron el éxito de la producción bélica que como una consecuencia directa, resultaría en la estimulación de la economía.

El primero de estos factores fue la organización de las Comisiones, Departamentos, Agencias y Oficinas encargados de la regulación de la producción; una tarea que desde el final de la PGM hasta el bombardeo a Pearl Harbor no fue fácil por el desorden y los conflictos burocráticos y logísticos que existían dentro de todos ellos. En este contexto y durante el periodo de entreguerras, el gobierno fue preparando los posibles escenarios a los que se enfrentaría en el caso de declarar la guerra mediante cuatro Planes de Movilización.⁶³ En general, estos planes se encargaron de la estructuración de las políticas que ayudarían a la logística de la movilización de la producción y, por ende, de la economía durante los periodos de guerra y posguerra. Entre sus principales preocupaciones y objetivos estaba la

⁵⁸ Arthur Herman. *Freedom's Forge: How American Business Produced Victory in World War II.*, p. 13.

⁵⁹ Alan L. Gropman. *Mobilizing US Industry in World War II: Myth and Reality.*, p. 3. "fewer than 200,000 men in the Army, only 125,200 in the Navy, and fewer than 20,000 in the Marine Corps." T. A.

⁶⁰ *Ídem.*, p. 3.

⁶¹ *Ídem.*, p. 3.

⁶² Arthur Herman. *op. cit.*, p. 10. "that had deteriorated for a full decade" T. A.

⁶³ Estos Planes de Movilización surgieron en diferentes momentos: el primero en 1930, el segundo en 1933, el tercero en 1936 y el cuarto en 1939.

obtención de materiales, el control de precios y el manejo del comercio con países extranjeros; el establecimiento de relaciones armónicas entre los diversos departamentos de guerra con las secretarías de la Armada y de la Marina, y la centralización de las organizaciones internas de muchas de esas comisiones, agencias, departamentos y oficinas de guerra.⁶⁴ Durante el conflicto muchas de estas dependencias tuvieron resultados poco satisfactorios debido a la falta de autoridad y organización dentro ellas;⁶⁵ además, hubo falta de apoyo del presidente mismo, de quien se esperaba mediara en los conflictos que surgían entre ellas. Sin embargo, después de Pearl Harbor, Franklin D. Roosevelt no tuvo tiempo ni energías para lidiar con este tipo de rencillas internas.⁶⁶

El segundo fue la transformación de las fábricas que antes de la guerra producían objetos y máquinas de uso cotidiano como refrigeradores, automóviles, vajillas de plata y que durante la guerra cambiaron completamente su producción original para elaborar exclusivamente municiones, tanques, instrumentos quirúrgicos o aviones bombarderos o de combate.⁶⁷ el “arsenal de la democracia”, como el presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt lo llamó.⁶⁸ Así fue como algunas marcas que aún hoy continúan obtuvieron contratos del gobierno o del Ejército, como el caso de “Goodyear para fabricar máscaras antigás, R.Hoe y Compañía para desarrollar mecanismos de retroceso para cañones antiaéreos, y General Electric para hacer reflectores de sesenta pulgadas. General Motors fue enlistado para producir camiones militares, y Winchester para hacer el nuevo rifle M1 para la Armería de Springfield.”⁶⁹ El caso de las aeronaves es el que resulta más significativo de entre todos los demás porque la fabricación de estas fue una de las prioridades estratégicas del gobierno del presidente Roosevelt por considerar a la aviación como la principal arma, si no es que la respuesta, para mantener la guerra lejos del territorio estadounidense.⁷⁰ Se pensaba que el poder aéreo podía marcar la diferencia entre una guerra larga y una corta, lo cual originaría

⁶⁴ Alan L. Gropman. *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁶⁵ *Ídem.*, p. 36-37.

⁶⁶ *Ídem.*, p. 40.

⁶⁷ *Ídem.*, p.

⁶⁸ *Fireside Chat* del 29 de diciembre de 1940. *Fireside Chats* fue una serie de treinta programas radiofónicos que el presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt realizó entre 1933 y 1944, y que fueron transmitidos durante el horario de programación vespertino. En ellos, el presidente abordaba temas como los lineamientos del Nuevo Trato, las condiciones del desempleo y de la economía, los programas de defensa y seguridad nacional, etc., antes de la declaración de guerra y después de ella temas como el progreso de la guerra, la crisis del carbón, las campañas de bonos de guerra y las condiciones del *home front*. *Vide*: Gerd Horten. *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁶⁹ Arthur Herman. *op. cit.*, p. 75. "Goodyear to manufacture gas masks, R.Hoe and Company to develop recoil mechanisms for aircraft guns, and General Electric to make sixty-inch searchlights. General Motors had been enlisted to produce military trucks, and Winchester to make the Springfield Armory's new M1 rifle." T. A.

⁷⁰ Alan L. Gropman. *op. cit.*, p. 34.

una nueva clase de conflictos: una que se podía resolver con bombardeos estratégicos cuyo resultado sería favorable porque sería más económica, con menos pérdidas humanas y con mayores probabilidades de tener éxito a diferencia de las que se desarrollaban en tierra o en mar.⁷¹

Asimismo, al calcular la cantidad necesaria de aviones, tanques, barcos, camiones y municiones, se hicieron recortes a la utilización civil de materias primas como aluminio, níquel, hierro y acero para ser utilizados exclusivamente en la producción bélica. Por su parte, el último automóvil de uso civil que salió de una línea de producción fue en febrero de 1942, pues las fábricas de las principales marcas como Ford, General Motors, Oldsmobile y Chrysler se dedicaron única y exclusivamente a la elaboración masiva de “más de 50 por ciento de todos los motores de aeronaves, 33 por ciento de todas las ametralladoras, 80 por ciento de todos los tanques y partes para tanques, la mitad de los motores de diésel, y 100 por ciento de los camiones que el Ejército utilizó.”⁷² Las cifras del crecimiento de la producción bélica son significativas si se hace una comparación entre lo que se fabricaba a finales de los treinta con lo que se logró durante los años de guerra. En el caso de los tanques, los Estados Unidos no fabricaban más de 40 tanques al año durante el periodo de entreguerras, en cambio entre 1939 y 1945 fabricaron en total más de 88 mil tanques: esta cifra deja atrás los casi 25 mil que fabricó el Reino Unido y los 24 mil de Alemania.⁷³ En el caso de la producción de aeronaves, Estados Unidos también sobrepasó la de sus aliados y enemigos; como se mencionó anteriormente, al ser una de las prioridades para el gobierno y el Ejército, la producción de aviones para 1939 circulaba alrededor de más de 5 mil elementos, pero “entre enero de 1940 y agosto de 1945 los Estados Unidos fabricaron 303,717 aeronaves.”⁷⁴ Desde luego no sólo la transformación de las fábricas influyó en el “suceso” de la producción bélica estadounidense, sino que también debe considerarse la construcción de muchas nuevas fábricas materializadas gracias al aporte de capital tanto privado como gubernamental. Estas factorías se situaron en todo el país, con mayor presencia a lo largo del sur de la costa este y del medio oeste estadounidense.⁷⁵

⁷¹ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, pp. 428-429.

⁷² Alan L. Gropman. *op. cit.*, p. 60. “more than 50 percent of all aircraft engines, 33 percent of all machine guns, 80 percent of all tanks and tank parts, one-half the diesel engines, and 100 percent of the trucks the Army moved on.” T. A.

⁷³ *Ídem.*, p. 93.

⁷⁴ *Ídem.*, p. 93. “between January 1940 and August 1945 the United States manufactured 303,717 aircraft.” T. A.

⁷⁵ “War Industry”. En *Life*. Vol. 10. Marzo 31, 1941., p. 66. *Vide*: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=IFMEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>. [Consulta

El tercer factor fue sin duda alguna la distancia, que separaba al país con ambos frentes: tanto el del Pacífico y el europeo. Las plantas de producción jamás se vieron afectadas por bombardeos enemigos como les sucedió a los demás países, lo cual favoreció para que la producción no se interrumpiera en ningún momento.

El cuarto y último factor consistía en el capital económico de producción. Desde un inicio quedó claro para el gobierno estadounidense que para ganar la guerra se iban a necesitar miles de millones de dólares. Una importante cantidad se obtuvo mediante el incremento de impuestos, gracias a los cuales se conseguiría cubrir el 45 por ciento de los 304 mil millones que se estimaban como el costo total de la guerra y cuyo pago el gobierno transformó en una especie de deber patriótico al igual que las exitosas campañas de recaudación de bonos de guerra.⁷⁶ Ambas modalidades “proporcionaron a la tesorería ingresos públicos y absorbieron el poder adquisitivo, ayudando a mantener la inflación bajo control.”⁷⁷ Otro elemento que marcó la diferencia fue la participación activa de una nueva fuerza de trabajo, hasta entonces relegada y conformada por las mujeres, los afroamericanos y los inmigrantes. Para ello se buscó superar toda discriminación. Sin embargo, los prejuicios relacionados a aspectos de género, etnia, religión o condición socioeconómica continuaron, no sólo en el caso de la fuerza de trabajo sino también en el Ejército y en la vida cotidiana, como se abordará con más atención en el capítulo 3. Pero aún a pesar de esto, el incremento del empleo en fábricas fue significativo, creciendo de 10 millones de empleados en 1939 a más de 16 millones para 1944.⁷⁸

Estos fueron los elementos que conformaron la industria de guerra estadounidense, una maquinaria bélica sin precedentes que gracias a la capacidad de sus bases industriales y tecnológicas, y del tamaño de su población logró los resultados esperados para alcanzar la victoria.⁷⁹

1.2. Contexto sociocultural

Mientras tanto, las expresiones, manifestaciones de la cultura estadounidense -tales como el cine, la radio, la música, la literatura y la ciencia-, durante la guerra jugaron un papel de vital

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⁷⁶ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 625.

⁷⁷ *Ídem.*, p. 626. “provided the treasury with revenue and soaked up purchasing power, helping to keep inflation in check.” T. A.

⁷⁸ Alan L. Gropman. *op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁷⁹ *Ídem.*, p. 134.

importancia porque proporcionaron los medios ideales con los cuales transmitir el mensaje de la causa bélica. A continuación, haremos un breve recorrido por cada una para ilustrar la forma en la que la guerra influyó en ellas.

1.2.1. Cine

La industria fílmica estadounidense, para inicios de los años cuarenta, se encontraba bien establecida como la más prolífera y poderosa del mundo. El sistema de estudios en Hollywood produjo, por ejemplo, entre 1942 y 1945 un total de 1,700 películas⁸⁰ y contaba con directores e intérpretes locales e internacionales que aportaban su visión y su talento. En el momento en el que Estados Unidos declaró la guerra primero a Japón y después a Alemania, las estrellas de cine se convirtieron en voceros y voceras de la causa,⁸¹ prestando su imagen para las giras de promoción de bonos de guerra como Carole Lombard y Myrna Loy, para visitar las bases militares y brindar entretenimiento a las tropas estacionadas como Marlene Dietrich y Bob Hope o enlistándose en las distintas ramas del ejército como fue el caso de actores consagrados de aquellos años tales como James Stewart, Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Tyrone Power o Henry Fonda. También se dio el caso de que no sólo actores y actrices sino también productores y directores donaban sangre para la Cruz Roja, instando así al resto de la sociedad a hacerlo en favor de la “Victoria y la Libertad.”⁸²

La guerra se convirtió para Hollywood en una inagotable fuente de inspiración de la cual obtener infinidad de tramas y personajes que constituiría el género cinematográfico de las *War Movies* (películas de guerra). Estas películas no eran de propaganda en sí, ya que el gobierno no las producía ni las financiaba, además de que eran cintas con personajes e historias ficticias dentro de un contexto de la vida real. Sin embargo, sí estaban cargadas con fuertes mensajes que hacían énfasis en favor de las causas por las que los Estados Unidos se encontraban en guerra. Sus tramas subrayaban la importancia de proteger los valores estadounidenses como la democracia o la libertad y representaban al ejército de una forma positiva y a sus integrantes como héroes que podían venir de cualquier contexto social:

⁸⁰ Ken D. Jones y Arthur F. McClure. *Hollywood at War. The American Motion Picture and World War II.*, p. 16.

⁸¹ Ya desde los años treinta, según información de Mauricio Sánchez, personajes fílmicos de origen judío como el actor Paul Muni y el director William Dieterle, atacaron y criticaron con la ayuda de los recursos cinematográficos la represión del régimen nazi. Un ejemplo singular es la película “La Vida de Emile Zolá” (1937) en la cual se recreaba el caso antisemita del militar Alfred Dreyfus

⁸² “Movie stars offer blood for victory as Red Cross starts nationwide drive”. En: *Life*. Vol. 12. Febrero 16, 1942., p. 29. Vide: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=QU4EAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [Consulta 02/02/14]

desde un granjero de Kansas hasta un estudiante de Harvard, un padre de familia o el hijo menor de una familia numerosa. En cambio representaban al enemigo como una verdadera amenaza a los valores estadounidenses, al tiempo que mostraban adhesión hacia las naciones que habían sido invadidas por las potencias del Eje. Cabe señalar que estas películas recrearon los frentes de batalla de forma edulcorada ya que este tipo de género cinematográfico se ofrecía únicamente como un escape a la crudeza de la guerra al mostrar en las pantallas escenas de las victorias.⁸³ “Las películas de guerra mitigaron muchas de las incertidumbres porque ofrecieron un medio para escapar de los sentimientos de inseguridad conectados al esfuerzo de guerra.”⁸⁴

Durante los últimos años de la década de los treinta, los realizadores y productores de Hollywood empezaron a plasmar en las pantallas la inminente guerra que se avecinaba, mostrando preocupación por la expansión del fascismo o por el desarrollo de la guerra civil española. Películas como *The Mortal Storm*,⁸⁵ *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*⁸⁶ o *Blockade*⁸⁷ son ejemplos de la clase de tramas que se manejaban en Hollywood por esos años. Una vez declarada la guerra de Estados Unidos contra Alemania y Japón, los estudios de Hollywood recibieron el apoyo y la solicitud para producir cine de propaganda de los distintos organismos encargados de la administración de la guerra, como el Departamento de Guerra, el Departamento de Marina y la OIG en materia de asesorías técnicas y préstamo de recursos. Por ejemplo, favoreció la participación como extras de verdaderos soldados o la prestación del uso de facilidades militares pero más que nada, en lo que debía ser excluido e incluido dentro de las tramas.⁸⁸ Las tramas de las películas de guerra comenzaron a mostrar temas que iban a la par de los sucesos que se desarrollaban en los diferentes frentes mostrando a los personajes que luchaban ahí, fuera en la fuerza aérea, los marines o la armada.

⁸³ Ken D. Jones and Arthur F. McClure. *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁸⁴ *Ídem*, p. 16. “The war movies assuaged many of the uncertainties because they provided a means of escaping from the feelings of insecurity connected with the war effort.” T. A.

⁸⁵ *The Mortal Storm* – La Hora Fatal (1940) Dirección: Fran Borzage. Producción: Fran Borzage y Victor Saville. Guión: Claudine West, Hans Rameau y George Froeschel. Música: Edward Kane. Fotografía: William H. Daniels. Protagonistas: Margaret Sullavan, James Stewart y Robert Young.

⁸⁶ *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) Dirección: Anatole Litvak. Producción: Robert Lord, Hal B. Wallis y Jack Warner. Guión: Milton Krims y John Wexley. Música: Max Steiner. Fotografía: Sol Polito. Protagonistas: Edward G. Robinson, Francis Lederer, George Sanders y Paul Lukas.

⁸⁷ *Blockade* (1938) Dirección: William Dieterle. Producción: Walter Wanger. Guión: John Howard Lawson. Música: Werner Janssen. Fotografía: Rudolph Maté. Protagonistas: Madeleine Carroll, Henry Fonda y Leo Carrillo.

⁸⁸ Gerd Horten. *op. cit.*, p. 117.

A medida que la guerra se intensificó en todos los frentes, y a pesar de que gran parte del público prefería las películas con temas relacionados no directamente con la guerra, las cintas de guerra continuaron produciéndose, filmándose y exhibiéndose en muchos de los cines locales. Se estableció el *Bureau of Motion Pictures*, el cual “colaboraba con la industria fílmica, interviniendo en ocasiones con mano dura, pidiendo revisar los guiones de las películas y demandando cambios importantes de la trama.”⁸⁹

De la misma forma que surgieron las películas de guerra, también lo hicieron los documentales o los filmes estrictamente de propaganda, los cuales también buscaron la ayuda de Hollywood. Un ejemplo es *Why We Fight* (1942-1945), un documental en siete partes producido por el *Army Pictorial Service* y concebido, escrito y editado por el cineasta italoamericano Frank Capra por encargo del general George Marshall. Un material fílmico que estaba dirigido a aquellos que aún se encontraban dudosos de participar en la guerra para apoyar a las naciones que acababan de cumplir tres años en guerra. El objetivo en particular era ilustrar a aquellos hombres en uniforme las metas a alcanzar mientras durara la guerra, las razones por las que tenían que luchar y ganar a toda costa.⁹⁰ Frank Capra también se encargó de un par de filmes más que complementarían el mensaje de la serie *Why We Fight: Know Your Enemy* y *Know Your Ally*, que como sus títulos lo indican, buscaban “instruir” a los soldados acerca de la historia de sus aliados: franceses, canadienses, británicos, australianos, etc. En cuanto a sus enemigos japoneses y alemanes, se buscó mantener los prejuicios y estereotipos ligados a ambas etnias o nacionalidades. Por ejemplo, se mostraba la naturaleza belicosa y arrogante del alemán como parte de su herencia; o se presentaba la naturaleza misteriosa del japonés, marcada por su estricto tradicionalismo, orgullo y crueldad.⁹¹ Lo que hizo Frank Capra, en sus propias palabras, fue reclutar:

⁸⁹ *Ídem.*, p. 117. “collaborate with the film industry, at times intervened in a heavy-handed fashion, asking to review film scripts and demanding major plot changes.” T. A.

⁹⁰ Leland Poague, ed. *Frank Capra interviews.*, pp. 57-58.

⁹¹ Ruth Benedict, en el estudio antropológico *La Espada y el Crisantemo* aborda las inquietudes del estadounidense sobre el tema de la naturaleza del enemigo japonés durante la SGM para así poder comprenderlo y combatirlo mejor. “El Japón fue el enemigo más enigmático con que se enfrentaron los Estados Unidos en una contienda. En ninguna otra guerra contra un enemigo poderoso había sido necesario tener en cuenta unos modos de actuar y de pensar tan profundamente diferentes [...] Debíamos tratar de comprender la mentalidad de los japoneses, sus emociones y las líneas de conducta correspondientes a esas formas de pensar y sentir. Había que conocer las motivaciones que se ocultaban tras sus actos y opiniones. Debíamos dejar de lado, por el momento, las premisas sobre las que nosotros, americanos, actuábamos y evitar por todos los medios el suponer que, en una situación determinada, ellos reaccionarían del mismo modo que nosotros.” *Vide*: Ruth Benedict. *La Espada y el Crisantemo. Patrones de la cultura japonesa.*, pp. 9 y 11.

Probablemente entre setenta y cinco o cien de los mejores cineastas en Hollywood. Entonces empezamos a acumular los filmes y noticiarios del enemigo además de filmes americanos y así sucesivamente, luego contamos la historia--una historia histórica--desde las invasiones a Manchuria en 1931, hasta el bombardeo a Pearl Harbor, cerca de diez años. Tratamos de contar, con detalle, con películas, la historia de esos diez años, y lo que provocó nuestra entrada en la Segunda Guerra Mundial.⁹²

Hacer un recorrido por las películas de guerra y por las de propaganda es hacer un recorrido por el desarrollo del conflicto en sí mismo, además de la forma en la que éste impactó en la sociedad y cómo era reflejado en las pantallas. Al fin y al cabo, la línea que separa a las películas de guerra con las de propaganda es muy delegada, y la única diferencia entre ellas es que “sólo en el campo de batalla se aprende a distinguir entre el cine de guerra y el cine *en la guerra*.”⁹³

1.2.2. Radio

La radio se consolidó como el principal proveedor de noticias dentro de los hogares estadounidenses, pues fue el medio más utilizado para información y entretenimiento desde finales de los años veinte y hasta la década de 1940 cuando se posicionó por arriba de los periódicos y a las revistas. En 1945, una encuesta afirmaba que la radio era el medio más seguido por la opinión pública. Así, a la pregunta “¿de qué fuente obtiene usted la mayoría de las noticias sobre lo que acontece: del periódico o de la radio?”, el 61 por ciento de los encuestados respondía que de la segunda.⁹⁴ Lo anterior no era una casualidad pues el 90 por ciento de la población estadounidense poseía un aparato radiofónico⁹⁵ y por ende, un medio de comunicación de vital importancia durante la guerra. En pocas palabras, el estadounidense se sentía mejor informado escuchando la radio que leyendo el periódico o viendo los noticiarios cinematográficos; se sentía más apegado a las transmisiones radiofónicas porque la radio era una experiencia que resultaba más real y mucho más personal que la realidad que les brindaban los periódicos, las revistas, los panfletos o el cine.⁹⁶ Tal vez uno de los ejemplos más conocidos que apoyan esta idea es el de aquella

⁹² Leland Poague, ed. *op. cit.*, p. 58. “Probably seventy-five to 100 top filmmakers in Hollywood. Then we began to accumulate the enemy films and news reels and American films and so forth, and we told the story-- and historical story-- from the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, about ten years. We tried to tell in detail, with motion pictures, the history of those ten years, and what brought about our entry into World War II.” T. A.

⁹³ Mauricio Sánchez Menchero. *Imágenes para la paz. 60 aniversario de The Battle of San Pietro, de John Huston*. Vide: <http://www.uam.mx/difusion/revista/feb2005/sanchez.html> [Consulta 28/01/15]

⁹⁴ Gerd Horten. *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁹⁵ *Ídem.*, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *Ídem.*, pp. 25- 27.

noche de *Halloween* de 1938 cuando un joven Orson Welles enloqueció a las masas que sintonizaban sus radios con la cobertura en vivo de la invasión a la tierra por parte de los extraterrestres... pero a pesar del furor y la paranoia, lo que en realidad narró Welles esa noche era una versión que él mismo escribió, dirigió y produjo de *La Guerra de los Mundos* de H.G. Wells a la que le dio un tono similar al de los boletines de noticias que se transmitían en ese entonces.⁹⁷

Una imagen muy común que se tiene de esos años es la de la familia reunida en una sala de la casa alrededor de un aparato radiofónico, la televisión a penas se anunciaba como una innovación todavía en ciernes. La gente escuchaba la radio a todas horas, atentos a una programación tan variada que brindaba “programas tanto nacionales como locales para grupos de interés especial; emisiones en lengua extranjera para inmigrantes; programas por parte de grupos cívicos de minorías; precios de cosecha y pronósticos del tiempo para granjeros; emisiones deportivas; historias de aventuras para niños, y música para todos los gustos y edades.”⁹⁸ Esto demuestra el público tan variado que incluso aún en nuestros días tiene la radio porque esta no discrimina por condiciones de educación o alfabetización, condición social, etnia o género.

La relación entre la guerra y la radio ciertamente fue muy estrecha. Aún antes de ésta, la radio jugó un papel de suma importancia durante el complejo debate que se mencionó al inicio de este apartado entre los no-intervencionistas y los intervencionistas, además de los sucesos de relevancia internacional como la crisis de Múnich y la anexión de Austria a Alemania. Fue en la radio donde se anunciaron grandes noticias como el discurso del 7 de diciembre del 1941 del presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt -“...un día que vivirá en la infamia...”- el anuncio de la rendición alemana así como la japonesa llegaron a los radioescuchas estadounidenses. Fue la radio la que proporcionó las noticias más actuales sobre el transcurso de la guerra a través de programas de opinión donde los corresponsales internacionales daban sus puntos de vista y mantenían al tanto sobre lo que acontecía; además de programas serios de propaganda del gobierno tales como “You Can't Do

⁹⁷ “El truco del guión se basaba en que el radioyente que acabase de sintonizar se encontrara con un programa de músicaailable en directo que, cada tanto, se interrumpía para dar paso a breves noticias relativas a ‘un gran objeto en llamas, al parecer un aerolito’, que había caído en una granja de Nueva Jersey y que resultaba ser la avanzada de una invasión marciana a la tierra...” Se trató de una recreación que parecía auténtica pero que en 1938 y con “la reciente noticia de la anexión hitleriana de Austria predispuso probablemente a los norteamericanos a creer en Orson [Welles]”. *Vide*: Barbara Leaming. *Orson Welles*. pp. 171 y 173.

⁹⁸ Gerd Horten. *op. cit.*, p. 2. “both national and local programs for special interest groups, foreign-language broadcasts for immigrants, programs by minority civic groups, crop prices and weather forecasts for farmers, sports broadcasting, adventure stories for children, and music for all tastes and ages.” T. A.

Business With Hitler” (No puedes hacer negocios con Hitler), “Women Versus Hitlerism” (Mujeres contra el hitlerismo), “The German Mother” (La madre alemana), “Origin of the Nazi Species” (Origen de las especies nazis) o “The Nazi State of Matrimony” (El estado matrimonial nazi),⁹⁹ los cuales, al igual que en el cine, tenían un objetivo muy específico: describir al enemigo y sus ideologías contrario al estadounidense. Fue la radio la que acompañó a quienes se quedaron en casa y a quienes partieron al frente. Gracias a la fuerte influencia que tenía dentro de la sociedad, tanto el gobierno como las agencias de publicidad y propaganda, los corporativos y las empresas se dieron cuenta de las ventajas de desplegar una campaña de propaganda en favor de la guerra dentro de todos los contenidos que la radio ofrecía: desde los comerciales hasta el programa cómico más popular, desde las radionovelas hasta los noticiarios, transformando así “la arena pública y cultural en una cultura de tiempos de guerra.”¹⁰⁰

El manejo de información se convirtió en una preocupación y una prioridad para los gobiernos aliados. La entrada en la guerra de los Estados Unidos marcó el inicio de una cooperación entre sus compañías radiofónicas y las británicas, las cuales se unieron para la transmisión de contenidos que pudieran llegar a los miles de soldados aliados que fueron movilizados durante la guerra. Esta fue una tarea que pretendía llevar entretenimiento e información que de alguna u otra forma los hiciera sentir cerca de casa, además de los contenidos propagandísticos que también se hicieron presentes gracias al establecimiento de oficinas de la OIG en Londres, Sydney y Wellington entre 1941 y 1942,¹⁰¹ los cuales, con la ayuda de la BBC trasmitían programas grabados de la OIG que:

Se beneficiaban con la disposición de las celebridades estadounidenses para transmitir a las audiencias extranjeras sin cobrar. Como parte de una serie llamada “América le responde a Australia”, Mickey Mouse y su creador Walt Disney aparecían ante el micrófono a petición de un alumno de una escuela de Sídney. De forma similar, en la serie llamada “América le habla a Australia y Nueva Zelanda”, Spencer Tracy invitaba a los radioescuchas a atender una “elocuente expresión de los ideales americanos a través de las palabras de Thomas Jefferson.” Otros oradores en esta misma serie incluyeron a Bing Crosby, Greer Garson, Paul Robertson y Cole Porter.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *Ídem.*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁰ *Ídem.*, p. 3. “the public and cultural arena into a wartime culture.” T. A.

¹⁰¹ Simon J. Potter. *op. cit.*, p. 135.

¹⁰² *Ídem.*, p. 136. “Benefited from the willingness of US celebrities to broadcast free of charge to overseas audiences. As part of a series called 'America Answers Australia', Mickey Mouse and his creator Walt Disney appeared at the microphone at the request of a Sydney schoolboy. Similarly, in the series 'America Talks to Australia and New Zealand', Spencer Tracy treated Australian and New Zealand listeners to an 'eloquent restatement of American ideals through the words of Thomas Jefferson'. Other speakers in the same series included, Bing Crosby, Greer Garson, Paul Robeson, and Cole Porter.” T. A.

Con este trabajo radiofónico conjunto se logró una especie de unión entre el pueblo estadounidense y el británico, su aliado más cercano en ideología y propósitos durante y después de la guerra.

1.2.3. Música, literatura y ciencias

La música y las letras estadounidenses, constantemente a la sombra europea, buscaban ya desde el siglo XIX una forma de expresión y un estilo propios. En general se pensaba que la cultura estadounidense era una mera copia de los estilos y gustos europeos. Con la guerra, la música y las letras, al igual que otras muestras culturales, comenzaron a expresar la difícil situación que estaba por venir, así como los sentimientos colectivos respecto a la guerra y cómo se lidiaba cotidianamente con ella. El escritor John Dos Passos lo resumió en una sola frase: “Un reflejo de Europa, es de todo lo que se trata América.”¹⁰³

En el caso de la música, fue el jazz¹⁰⁴ el que desde finales del siglo XIX se consolidó como la expresión artística estadounidense por antonomasia. El jazz nació en Nueva Orleans gracias a la unión de varios ritmos, sonidos e improvisaciones utilizados principalmente por músicos afroamericanos, quienes a su vez se inspiraron en los ritmos y los bailes que sus antepasados esclavos llevaban a cabo casi de forma clandestina.¹⁰⁵ Las raíces africanas, tanto en los instrumentos como en los movimientos, tenían un origen ritual. El jazz se considera como la culminación de un largo proceso de “sincretismo” que terminó en la “americanización de la música africana” y la “africanización de la música americana.”¹⁰⁶ Otras influencias del jazz son aquellas que venían de la parte tanto española como francesa del estado de Luisiana. Pero al hablar de jazz también es necesario mencionar otros géneros musicales con los cuales se acopló, tales como el ragtime, el blues, el swing o el funk; es

¹⁰³ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 387. “Reflection of Europe, is what America is all about.” T. A.

¹⁰⁴ El jazz puede ser descrito con la letra de la siguiente canción: ‘Bout twenty years ago (Hace unos veinte años) / Way down in New Orleans (Camino hacia abajo en Nueva Orleans) / A group of fellows found (Un grupo de chicos encontró) / A new kind of music (Un nuevo tipo de música) / And they decided to call it... JAZZ (Y ellos decidieron llamarla... JAZZ) / No other sound has (Ningún otro sonido tiene) / What this music has (Lo que esta música tiene) / Before they knew it (Antes de que lo supieran) / It was squeezing round the world (Se estaba reuniendo alrededor del mundo) / The world was ready (El mundo estaba listo) / For a blue kind of music (Para un tipo de música blue) / And now they play it (Y ahora la tocan) / From Steamboat Springs to La Paz (Desde Steamboat Springs hasta la Paz). Fragmento de la letra de “Le Jazz Hot” de la película Víctor/Victoria (1982). Letra de Leslie Bricusse. T. A.

¹⁰⁵ Ted Gioia. *The History of Jazz.*, pp. 7-8. Resulta “clandestino” porque muchas de las formas de expresión de de los esclavos, todas con elementos africanos, eran reprimidas y en muchos casos prohibidas por las autoridades religiosas y estatales, por lo cual, las danzas, la música, los instrumentos mismos y básicamente cualquier tipo de reunión entre ellos se llevaba a cabo a las espaldas de sus amos.

¹⁰⁶ *Ídem.*, p. 5.

decir, toda una historia de apropiaciones y conjunción cultural de la que está hecho Estados Unidos.

Ahora bien, ya entrados los años de la década de 1930, fue la figura de George Gershwin, la que unió con bastante éxito un par de géneros musicales que podría pensarse no se complementarían jamás: el jazz y la música clásica o de concierto. Gershwin compuso obras como la que se considera la gran ópera estadounidense *Porgy and Bess*, así como obras musicales como *Rhapsody in Blue* y *An American in Paris*, dándole otra categoría a la música de raíces afroamericanas. Para finales de la década de 1930 e inicios de la de 1940, otros compositores como Samuel Barber y Aaron Copland daban muestras de que en la rama de la música clásica los compositores estadounidenses también podían experimentar con sonidos y armonías de la misma forma que en Europa lo hacían los compositores como Igor Stravinsky o Maurice Ravel.¹⁰⁷ Sin embargo, en las salas de concierto también aparecieron los nombres de John Alden Carpenter, Howard Hanson, William H. Schumann, Roy Harris, quienes pertenecieron a una nueva generación de músicos de la cual los propios estadounidenses podían decir: “We have composers now!”:¹⁰⁸ es decir, se trató de compositores con técnica, energía y coraje suficientes con el que podían resaltar en la escena musical de la misma forma que lo hacían los compositores europeos, según lo recalca el director de la Sinfónica de Boston de 1924 a 1949, Serge Koussevitzky.¹⁰⁹

Pero en lo que respecta a la música y las canciones populares, eran las grandes bandas y personajes como Glenn Miller, Cab Calloway o Benny Goodman, entre otros, los que dominaban la escena y que durante la guerra también contribuyeron a la causa. El propio Miller se enlistó como voluntario en el ejército, dio conciertos para las tropas y desapareció mientras volaba para entretener a unas compañías de soldados en Francia en 1944. Figuras como las de Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holliday o Frank Sinatra también se consolidaron en el gusto del público. La guerra se introdujo en la industria musical poco a poco. Las canciones mostraban una imagen burlona y desdeñosa de las potencias que conformaban el Eje: “You're a Sap, Mr. Jap” [Usted es un bobo, sr. Japonés] (1941), “We're Gonna Have to Slap the Dirty Little Jap (and Uncle Sam's the Guy Who Can Do It)” [Vamos a tener que abofetear al japonés un poco sucio (y el Tío Sam es el

¹⁰⁷ Robert M. Cundren. *op. cit.*, p. 300.

¹⁰⁸ Serge Koussevitzky. “American Composers”. En *Life*. Vol. 16. Abril 25, 1944., pp. 55-62. *Vide*: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=B1AEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [Consulta 27/02/14]

¹⁰⁹ *Ídem.*, p. 62

tipo que puede hacerlo] (1941), "We'll Knock the Japs Right into the Laps of the Nazis" [Vamos a golpear a los japoneses directo con las faldas de los nazis] (1941) y "Der Fuehrer's Face" [La cara del Fuehrer] (1942) Otras mostraban contenidos altamente patrióticos como la ya clásica "God Bless America" [Dios bendiga a América] (1918), "Remember Pearl Harbor" [Recuerden a Pearl Harbor] (1941), "Allegiance to the Red White and Blue" [Lealtad al rojo, blanco y azul] (1942) y "For the Flag, for the Home, for the Family" [Por la bandera, el hogar y la familia] (1942).¹¹⁰ Pero el verdadero impacto de la guerra en la música y su industria fue el alistamiento de muchos jóvenes músicos: la campaña de racionamiento de bienes que afectó directamente a la vida nocturna de los clubes y salones de baile, los cuales apoyaban en gran medida la difusión musical; la desaparición de muchas de las grandes bandas tan populares: el surgimiento de bandas compuestas únicamente por mujeres,¹¹¹ y el alcance de la radio, que como se mencionó anteriormente, llevaba entretenimiento musical a todas partes del mundo.

En cuanto a la literatura, los escritores estadounidenses también buscaron una identidad propia. En la primera mitad del siglo XX surgieron muchos de los autores de poesía y prosa más reconocidos e influyentes de las letras estadounidenses tales como F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, John Steinbeck, T.S. Eliot o William Faulkner; todos ellos nacidos en los últimos años del siglo XIX, vivieron los años de la Gran Guerra, cuya influencia se vio reflejada en mucha de su obra mostrando en ella que "el ser un escritor americano, casi siempre, ha sido un asunto de vivir en el encuentro de dos culturas diferentes, tratando de dramatizar y resolver sus diferencias."¹¹² También surgió una generación de escritores que plasmaron en su obra el lugar que ocuparon en una sociedad tan desigual como lo era la sociedad estadounidense de los primeros años del siglo XX. Era la generación de escritores afroamericanos que empezó con Booker T. Washington y continuó con W. E. B. Du Bois y James Weldon Johnson, quienes mostraron en sus obras "la dualidad negra", es decir, el sentir del afroamericano como un ser invisible que padece falta de identidad y pertenencia por tener "dos almas, dos pensamientos, dos esfuerzos irreconciliables; dos ideales guerreros en un cuerpo oscuro."¹¹³ Por otro lado, estaba la

¹¹⁰ William H. Young y Nancy K. Young. *Music from the World War II Era.*, p. XIII.

¹¹¹ *Ídem.*, p. XIII.

¹¹² Richard J. Gray. *Brief History of America Literature.*, p. 183. "to be an American writer has, nearly always, been a matter of living in the encounter between different cultures, trying to dramatize and resolve the differences." T. A.

¹¹³ *Ídem.*, p. 161. "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body". T. A.

generación de escritoras como Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow y Willa Cather, también nacidas en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX y en cuyas obras el papel principal recaía en una mujer. Edith Wharton se ocupó de mostrar a la mujer dentro de un entorno de matrimonios y relaciones infelices en el contexto de la alta sociedad, donde las apariencias y los convencionalismos dictaban la forma de vida, en una forma de manifestar su propia realidad. Mientras que Ellen Glasgow y Willa Cather, sureñas, también se ocuparon de mostrar su realidad en la ficción de sus obras, dándole al sur y su figura un lugar preponderante dentro de ellas, retratando la estela de cambio que el fin de siglo dejó sobre esta zona que en la cultura estadounidense se le considera constantemente como un concepto en sí: no se trata únicamente de una región, sino la representación de lo romántico, lo cruel y lo que muchos consideran “americano”. Dentro de esta clase de “Literatura Sureña” también estaban autoras como Carson McCullers y Flannery O'Connor pero que se diferenciaban de las anteriores porque en su obra y sus personajes estaban presentes elementos de carácter grotesco y gótico. El caso de Carson McCullers es excepcional porque mostró personajes cuyas características los hacían marginados dentro de la sociedad en la que vivían: desde un sordomudo, una joven poco femenina, un profesor que sufre de impotencia sexual, un doctor afroamericano y comunista, entre otros; todos ellos dentro del marco de su novela *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, asimismo abordó temas como la homosexualidad y el racismo en un momento en el que éstos eran considerados un tabú.

También es importante mencionar la influencia que en la cultura estadounidense del siglo XX tuvieron aquellos personajes que llegaron como exiliados de sus países de origen, en donde eran perseguidos fuera por su raza, por su religión o por meras inclinaciones políticas. Estados Unidos abrió sus fronteras a intelectuales alemanes, húngaros, entre otros, quienes dejaron huella en el ámbito intelectual estadounidense creando instituciones y contribuyendo a las diversas expresiones culturales. Casos muy significativos son los del físico húngaro Leo Szilard, quien estuvo involucrado en la consolidación de la investigación nuclear en los Estados Unidos; el matemático húngaro John Von Neumann, quien dio importantes pasos en el ámbito de las computadoras y el físico danés Niels Bohr cuya línea de investigación era la de la estructura del átomo. También otros personajes como J. Robert Oppenheimer y los físicos húngaro e italiano, respectivamente, Edward Teller y Emilio Segrè formaron parte del infame Proyecto Manhattan que dio como resultado el desarrollo de la bomba atómica que finalizaría la guerra a un terrible costo y con las ya conocidas

consecuencias humanas, ecológicas y sociales.¹¹⁴ En otros ámbitos culturales como la sociología, estaba el austriaco Paul Lazarsfeld quien terminó por fundar en la Universidad de Columbia un área exclusiva para los estudios sobre sociología. El filósofo y sociólogo alemán T.W. Adorno también llegó a Estados Unidos mientras la guerra azotaba Europa y durante los diez años que pasó entre Los Ángeles y Nueva York, realizó estudios sobre el anti-semitismo y la personalidad potencialmente fascista.¹¹⁵

1.3. El concepto de *Home Front*

Para esta investigación el concepto del *home front* resulta de vital importancia, ya que, como se mencionó anteriormente, el objetivo principal es concentrarnos en las representaciones de la mujer en la propaganda que nacieron en y para el *home front* con el fin de apoyar el esfuerzo de guerra. Una situación que trajo cambios en los roles de género durante los años que duró en el conflicto mundial.

Home front se traduce literalmente como el “frente doméstico”. Ciertamente este término no está relacionado exclusivamente con la SGM, pues está presente en cualquier conflicto: mientras haya frentes donde librar las batallas que definen el curso de las guerras, también estarán considerados los espacios en la retaguardia donde aquéllos que no tienen una condición de beligerantes permanecen, atentos a las noticias y sufriendo las consecuencias de las guerras, cualquiera que éstas sean. Sin embargo, se puede decir que el término como tal se originó en el siglo XX. Desde la Gran Guerra, se manejó la idea de un frente doméstico conformado por mujeres, niños y aquellos hombres no aptos fuera por condiciones de salud o de edad.

Fue durante la SGM cuando la idea del *home front* cobró un significado especial para todos los países involucrados en el conflicto. En Estados Unidos, el *home front* se estableció como otro frente igual de importante que los de batalla en Europa o en el Pacífico. Tal vez sin balas o cañones pero el *home front* estadounidense también libró sus propias batallas contra lo que la inexperiencia laboral atañía, la discriminación, el racionamiento, las malas nuevas provenientes de los frentes de batalla, la soledad y la desmoralización.

Con la idea o concepto de un *home front* durante la SGM, surgió también una nueva forma de hacer la guerra. El *home front* estadounidense nunca sufrió ataques enemigos pero no se puede decir lo mismo de la retaguardia europea. La forma de hacer la ofensiva

¹¹⁴ Robert M. Cundren. *op. cit.*, pp. 277-279.

¹¹⁵ *Ídem.*, pp. 281-283.

moderna, una guerra total,¹¹⁶ significó ampliar el alcance del estrago en las vidas de los involucrados en ella. El *home front*, podía convertirse en el blanco perfecto para desmoralizar al enemigo mediante el ataque a las fábricas, las minas, los pozos petroleros y a la población civil.

Ciertamente el *home front* de Estados Unidos durante la SGM no sufrió de ataques ni daños materiales, pero sí padecía otros estragos que terminarían por moldear a la sociedad por venir. Unos de estos cambios provocados por la guerra fue la migración: grandes cantidades de personas necesitaron trasladarse de una costa a otra o de sur a norte con la esperanza de mejorar gracias al trabajo asalariado en las industrias bélicas en los campos de entrenamiento militar. El desplazamiento del lugar de origen a uno donde existía una garantía de trabajo y prosperidad no fue un fenómeno exclusivo de la SGM. Hay que recordar que durante el periodo de la Gran Depresión también fue muy común el establecimiento de una retaguardia debido a sucesos como el *Dust Bowl*, el desastre natural que provocó sequías en gran parte del territorio estadounidense y que orilló a miles de familias, particularmente familias de granjeros, a trasladarse a estados como California. Esto describe la novela de John Steinbeck, *Las Uvas de la Ira*. Ciertamente durante la SGM, la migración también respondió a razones económicas y terminó por cambiar el rostro de la sociedad, sin embargo, se dio en una escala sin precedentes con alrededor de:

Quince millones de personas -uno de cada ocho civiles- cambiaron su lugar de residencia en los tres y medio años después de Pearl Harbor [...] Ocho millones de ellos se mudaron permanentemente a diferentes estados; la mitad de éstos a diferentes regiones. Una gran corriente migratoria llevó personas del sur al norte. Una segunda y mayor corriente fluyó del este al oeste. Como si el país entero se hubiera inclinado hacia el oeste, la gente fue expulsada desde el sur y las Grandes Llanuras hacia los estados de la costa del Pacífico, especialmente California [...] Ríos interminables de trabajadores se dirigieron a los grandes centros metropolitanos de la producción de defensa: Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, San Diego, Los Ángeles, Oakland, Portland, y Seattle.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ El pensador francés Raymond Aron denominó al siglo XX como el siglo de la llamada “guerra total”. Este concepto se le suele atribuir oficialmente a Claude von Clausewitz, militar y teórico de la ciencia militar prusiano. Sin embargo, lo que a von Clausewitz le interesaba particularmente era un concepto muy diferente, denominado como la “guerra absoluta”, donde la guerra se llevara a cabo sin ataduras ni restricciones políticas. Durante la PGM, el general alemán Erich Ludendorff, llamó guerra total a la completa subordinación del conflicto a la política y que el único fin podría ser una victoria total o una derrota total; una idea que era opuesta a la “guerra absoluta” de von Clausewitz. Así mismo, se piensa que el general Sherman llevó a cabo una aproximación a la “guerra total” durante la Guerra de Secesión estadounidense con el ataque y asedio de poblaciones civiles. Vide: Christopher Bassford. *Clausewitz in English: the Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America, 1815-1945*; Naief Yehya. *Guerra y propaganda: medios masivos y el mito bélico en Estados Unidos.*, p. 24 y Agustín Saavedra Weise. *El General Sherman y la Guerra Total*.

¹¹⁷ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 748. “Fifteen million persons - one out of every eight civilians-- changed their county of residence in the three and a half after Pearl Harbor [...] Eight million of them moved permanently to different states; half of those to different regions. One great migratory stream carried people from the south to

Otro de los fenómenos que se produjeron en el *home front* estadounidense fue la reclusión de los ciudadanos de ascendencia japonesa en campos de concentración con el pretexto de evitar amenazas que afectaran la soberanía estadounidense, tales como casos de traición y espionaje. Muchos de ellos vivían en la costa oeste, especialmente en estados como California y Washington, y desde hacía un par de generaciones trabajaban y tenían negocios propios, estudiaban en escuelas especiales y vivían divididos entre el tradicionalismo que dictaban sus orígenes y la “libertad” que ofrecía un país como los Estados Unidos. Después de Pearl Harbor, la tendencia a considerar a los japoneses como villanos, crueles y cobardes¹¹⁸ se volvió una realidad con la que los medios y el gobierno estadounidense mantuvieron vivo el odio hacia el que alguna vez había sido su vecino o su compañero de trabajo. Esta actitud hacia el japonés fue más acendrada que la dirigida a sus otros enemigos alemanes o italianos. Por eso, lo que sucedió con la población japonesa-americana (nisei) fue “especialmente inquietante en una América en tiempo de guerra, precisamente porque se burlaba tan abiertamente de la mejor imagen que la nación tenía de sí misma como una sociedad tolerantemente inclusiva, imparcial y como un “crisol.”¹¹⁹

Conviene recordar que el *home front* estadounidense, dentro del esfuerzo de guerra, llevó a cabo las siguientes tareas: la producción de armamento; el racionamiento de recursos como materias primas y alimentos; el control de información para evitar el espionaje militar; el cuidado médico de aquéllos que regresaban heridos; la espera paciente de los que se reportaban desaparecidos en acción, y el cuidado para mantener la moral en alto en medio de la pérdida y los sacrificios que la guerra reclamaba. Aquí conviene señalar el papel que jugó la propaganda y el flujo de información en y para el *home front*, y que se recibía del frente. Fue muy importante porque se trataba de darle un significado a esos sacrificios, justificando de alguna u otra forma esas pérdidas, las que todos sufrían y afectaban sus vidas. La propaganda se encargó no sólo de promover el alistamiento en el ejército o los trabajos en las fábricas, sino también en glorificar el papel de aquellas personas que se quedaban en el *home front* a las que también se mostraba peleando batallas. El objetivo era

the north. A second and larger stream flowed from east to west. As if the entire continent had been tilted westward, people spilled out of the South and the Great Plains into the Pacific coastal states, specially California [...] Endless rivers of workers poured into the great metropolitan centers of defense production-- Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago, San Diego, Los Angeles, Oakland, Portland, and Seattle.” T. A.

¹¹⁸ *Vide* nota 89. Se calcula que fueron reclusos en Estados Unidos más de 75 mil ciudadanos americanos de origen japonés (nisei) y más de 40 mil japoneses (issei) de California, Washington, Oregon y Arizona.

¹¹⁹ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 765. “especially disquieting in wartime America precisely because it so loudly mocked the nation's best image of itself as a tolerantly inclusive, fair-minded, ‘melting pot’ society...” T. A.

mantener este frente relativamente bien informado, optimista, seguro, próspero. Así como mantener la moral en alto en el *home front* fue una de las prioridades del gobierno a través de las agencias de propaganda, la protección del *home front* fue la prioridad de los organismos de defensa de la administración estadounidense. En este contexto, nacieron muchos de los símbolos con los que la sociedad estadounidense terminó identificándose. Durante la PGM, por ejemplo, destacó la famosa imagen del “Tío Sam”. Se trataba de una representación iconográfica del gobierno de los Estados Unidos, nacida originalmente a principios del siglo XIX,¹²⁰ que durante la Gran Guerra fue reutilizada en el diseño de J. M. Flagg.¹²¹ En ésta aparecía el rostro amenazante de un hombre mayor que, con una mirada fija y un dedo que señalaba directamente hacia al varón que lo contemplará como espectador. El mensaje era un claro exhorto a unirse al ejército. Durante la SGM, la imagen del “Tío Sam” se volvió a utilizar pero también surgieron nuevos símbolos como “Rosie the Riveter”.

En este primer capítulo se llevó a cabo un recorrido por la situación política, económica, social y cultural de los Estados Unidos en los años antes y durante el conflicto mundial a partir de 1941. De esta forma hemos presentado un contexto general para comprender la forma en la que la guerra llegó a influenciar cada aspecto de la vida cotidiana estadounidense para así entender mejor las implicaciones que tuvo la propaganda en el *home front* tal y como en el siguiente capítulo se desarrollará.

¹²⁰ De acuerdo con fuentes, una de las primeras menciones del Tío Sam se remonta a los años de la Guerra de Independencia, en la versión original de una canción llamada *Yankee Doodle*. Sin embargo, la imagen del Tío Sam surgió como tal durante la Guerra de 1812 y pretendió ser una representación del presidente Samuel Wilson. De ahí en adelante, esta imagen ha estado presente en el imaginario visual estadounidense en grabados, publicidad, literatura, etc. *Vide*: Robert Haven Schauflyer. *Flag Day*. New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1912. 225 p., p. 145.

¹²¹ Este cartel se inspiró a su vez en un cartel de reclutamiento británico de 1914, creado por el artista Alfred Leete y que representaba al por ese entonces secretario de guerra británico Lord Kitchener.

Capítulo 2. Representaciones de la mujer en la propaganda (1914-1945)

We [women] can best help you [men] to prevent war not by joining your society but by remaining outside your society but in co-operation with its aims. That aim is the same for us both. It is to assert the rights of all-all men and women- to the respect in their persons of the great principles of Justice and Equality and Liberty.
Virginia Woolf

2.1. Antecedentes

El siglo XX, en palabras de Renate Bridenthal, “se ha enorgullecido de los logros en los derechos de la mujer”¹²² y con razón, porque marcó el momento definitivo en el que, particularmente, los papeles de las mujeres dentro de la sociedad, se transformaron para siempre muy a pesar de los contratiempos, las adversidades y la lentitud con los que se fueron dando. De alguna forma constituyen un proceso histórico donde se ha pasado de “la historia de ellos” (*history*) a “la historia de ellas” (*her story*)¹²³ como resultado de la utilización de una falsa etimología que han hecho algunas feministas y que encierra toda una época de cambios en cuanto a las representaciones tradicionales de hombres y mujeres.¹²⁴ El primer paso hacia este proceso de transformación fue la herencia de las primeras inquietudes feministas del siglo XIX, que derivaron en cierto modo en el inicio de los movimientos sufragistas en Europa y Estados Unidos. Movimientos que se consolidaron después de la PGM y que se materializaron con el eventual reconocimiento del voto femenino en países como Alemania, Suecia, Austria, Hungría, Lituania, Letonia y Estonia, Estados Unidos y el Reino Unido.¹²⁵ Asimismo, la Revolución Rusa y la SGM terminarían por ampliar, de alguna u otra forma, los nuevos horizontes en el ámbito laboral y social para las mujeres. La transformación continuaría con la nueva oleada de los movimientos feministas y la Revolución Sexual durante la segunda mitad del siglo XX.

Ahora bien, si la representación es una noción que dentro de la historia cultural permite “unir estrechamente las posiciones y las relaciones sociales con la manera en que los individuos y los grupos sociales se perciben a sí mismos”,¹²⁶ es de nuestro interés analizar la evolución de la imagen de la mujer como un efecto de los cambios generados a

¹²² Renate Bridenthal. “Something old, something new: women between the two world wars”. En: Renate Bridenthal, et. al. *Becoming Visible. Women in European History.*, p. 473. “prided itself on gains in women's rights.” T. A.

¹²³ Un juego de palabras en inglés pero que es intraducible al español.

¹²⁴ Joan Wallach Scott, *Género e historia*, pp. 37 y 45.

¹²⁵ Renate Bridenthal. *op. cit.*, p. 474.

¹²⁶ Roger Chartier. *El presente del pasado. Escritura de la historia, historia de lo escrito*, p. 35.

partir de la SGM. Ciertamente ésta tesis se enfoca, particularmente, en las representaciones de la mujer durante el conflicto bélico en Estados Unidos. Sin embargo, no se dejan de lado las imágenes que se originaron desde finales del siglo XIX tanto en este país como en Europa, las cuales demuestran el cambio gradual en los papeles asignados a la mujer dentro de la sociedad. Y es que resulta indudable que las representaciones visuales marcan un antes y un después en la comprensión y la forma de ver, estudiar y reflexionar en torno a los sucesos históricos que las ven nacer, más que nada porque:

Es imposible comprender plenamente los acontecimientos del siglo XX, como la Segunda Guerra Mundial sin prestar una cuidadosa atención al papel que jugaron las imágenes visuales en agitar y dar forma a las actitudes del público. Es igualmente imposible comprender el papel desempeñado por determinadas imágenes visuales sin prestar atención a las circunstancias históricas que proporcionaron su marco.¹²⁷

2.1.1. Antecedentes europeos y estadounidenses (1914-1920)

Generalmente se considera a la Gran Guerra como uno de los momentos cruciales en los que la mujer occidental comenzó a romper con muchos de los papeles que se le adjudicaban. Estos, de acuerdo a Nicole Ann Dombrowski, en el contexto de una guerra decimonónica, tendían “a confinar a soldados a campos de batalla bien delimitados y a las mujeres a los hospitales.”¹²⁸ Ciertamente, la Gran Guerra trastocó, aunque sólo fuera momentáneamente, los papeles masculinos del soldado que partía al frente y ejercía las tareas del guerrero, y los papeles femeninos de la mujer que hacía importantes aportaciones en campos que estaban más de acuerdo a las que se consideraban sus “tareas naturales”. Sin embargo, a partir de la PGM la mujer se involucró en actividades tales como el cuidado de los enfermos o de la administración, que por ende la orillaban, invariablemente, a escoger las labores en las áreas de la enfermería. Pero también, fue durante la Gran Guerra, cuando las mujeres, además de aventurarse en el área de la salud, se encargaron de tareas y trabajos que hasta entonces eran impensables que llevaran a cabo. Así, por ejemplo, participando por primera vez en el esfuerzo de guerra al unirse en la producción de pertrechos y maquinaria militares en las industrias bélicas, un trabajo que repetiría durante la SGM pero a mayor escala y con mayores repercusiones. La Gran Guerra significó para la

¹²⁷ George Roeder. *op. cit.*, p. 6. “It is impossible fully to understand twentieth-century events like World War II without careful attention to the role played by visual images in stirring and shaping public attitudes. It is equally impossible to understand the roles played by particular visual images without careful attention to the historical circumstances that provided their frame.” T. A.

¹²⁸ Nicole Ann Dombrowski, ed. *Women and War in the Twentieth Century. Enlisted With or Without Consent.*, p. 26. “confine soldiers to well-demarcated battlefields and women to hospitals.” T. A.

mujer su:

Entrada definitiva a la maquinaria de guerra. Para algunas mujeres, abrió puertas a la educación [...] Creó nuevos espacios para la participación en las diversas economías de guerra. Facilitó la entrada a la esfera política. La entrada también implicó a las mujeres en la destrucción de la guerra. Para el final de la guerra, cualquier victoria que las mujeres, tanto pacifistas como patriotas, recibieron, ya fuera en la forma del voto, beneficios de maternidad, o pensiones para viudas, fue compensada por alguna pérdida irreparable- un hermano, padre, esposo, o futuro esposo. La PGM demostró que el patriotismo ciego sedujo tanto a las mujeres como a los hombres.¹²⁹

Durante el conflicto que prometió terminar con todas las guerras, la idea de que los “tres papeles femeninos -guerrera, damisela que espera, y víctima indefensa- que han existido simultáneamente como complementos a la vocación del soldado y como un estímulo a su labor”,¹³⁰ también volvió a repetirse. Mucha de la propaganda que se produjo durante los años del conflicto muestra esta idea que permaneció hasta la SGM, como un recordatorio del deber tanto de la mujer como del hombre combatiente y del papel que tanto ella como él debían ejercer dentro del esfuerzo de guerra.

El papel de la mujer guerrera quedó suprimido a meras representaciones alegóricas, como en el caso de “Britannia”¹³¹ (Fig. 1) o de “Columbia”¹³² (Fig. 2) que recuerdan las representaciones que se hicieron de la “Libertad” o de la “Patria” en el contexto de la Francia revolucionaria de los siglos XVIII y XIX, y que demostraban el problema de las representaciones de la mujer guerrera: ¿cómo crear una representación de la mujer que lejos de ser desafiante para la estabilidad y la permanencia de las divisiones sociales de género,

¹²⁹ *Ídem.*, p. 7 “Definitive entry to the war machine. For some women, it opened doors to education [...] It created new spaces for participation in the various war economics. It eased entry into the political realm. Entrance also implicated women in the war's destruction. By war's end, whatever victory women pacifists and patriots alike received, either in the form of the franchise, maternity benefits, or widow's pensions, was offset by some form of irreplaceable loss- a brother, father, husband, or future husband. WWI demonstrated that blind patriotism seduced women as well as men.” T. A.

¹³⁰ *Ídem.*, p. 2. “three female roles- warrior, maid in waiting, and helpless victim- have existed simultaneously as complements to the vocation of the male soldier and as encouragement to his task.” T. A.

¹³¹ Representación alegórica de la Commonwealth.

¹³² Representación alegórica de los Estados Unidos.



Fig. 1. Cartel de reclutamiento británico, David Lloyd George. *National Service*, 1917.



Fig. 2. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Joseph Christian Leyendecker. *Will you have a part in victory?*, c1918.

resultara inspiradora no sólo para la mujer sino también para el hombre, sin que a éste último le provocara preocupación el verse reemplazado o superado por su contraparte femenina?¹³³ Esto ha tenido por resultado una constante tendencia a representar a la mujer guerrera de una forma puramente “inofensiva”, reduciéndola a las simples alegorías, en lugar de representarla como una mujer fuerte, independiente y capaz. Representarlas meramente como guerreras podría resultar chocante e incluso contraproducente. Dentro de las representaciones femeninas de tipo guerrera inocua difundidas en carteles durante la Gran Guerra podrían ser consideradas, además de las alegorías de la patria, las diversas representaciones de mujeres vistiendo el uniforme militar ya fuera de la Marina (Fig. 3) o de los *marines* a pesar de que aún no era permitido el ingreso de ellas al ejército. Esto demostraba que, al fin y al cabo, estas imágenes fueron creadas para llamar la atención masculina y no para despertar alguna clase de conciencia de cambio en los papeles que tenía la mujer hasta ese entonces.

¹³³ Linda Nochlin. *Representing Women*, p. 48.



Fig. 3. Cartel de reclutamiento estadounidense, Howard Chandler Christy. *I want you for the Navy*, 1917.

El segundo papel, el de la doncella en espera del soldado que bien podría ser su padre, su hermano, su esposo, su prometido, así como el tercer papel de la víctima indefensa, tenían un mensaje muy específico que estaba principalmente dirigido hacia el hombre combatiente. Un mensaje que lo alentaba a enlistarse y a luchar, no sólo por su nación, su rey, su ideal de democracia y libertad, sino también para proteger algo más cercano y concreto que los meros ideales por más importantes que éstos fueran, es decir: su familia. Debido al papel tradicional que les correspondía como varones, ellos mismos debían proporcionar la seguridad del hogar a la madre, la hermana, la esposa, la hija o la prometida que hubieran dejado en casa, gracias a su sacrificio en los frentes para lograr el éxito en la campaña militar contra el enemigo. Para enfatizar la necesidad de la victoria, se comenzó a representar al enemigo como una bestia, un animal amenazante que atentaba en contra de la pureza, el honor, la sexualidad de las mujeres indefensas (Fig. 4), y que sería una clase de representación que también se repetiría durante la SGM. Este tipo de imágenes terminó por “reiterar la idea dominante de la masculinidad como protectora y la femineidad como

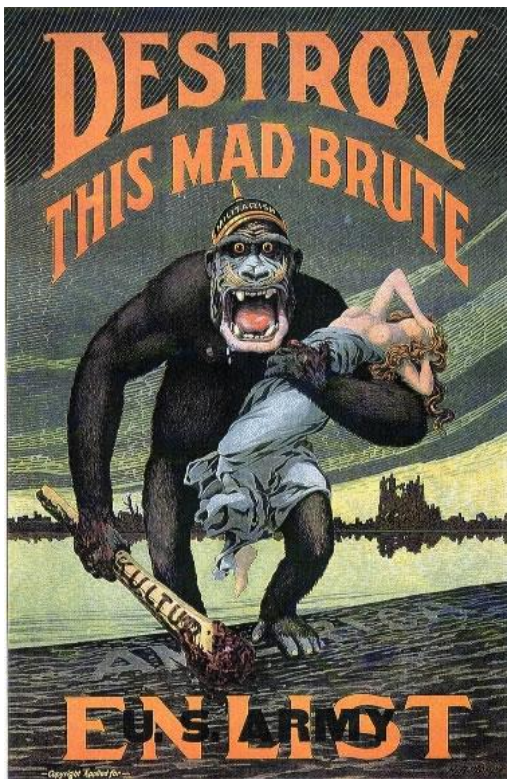


Fig. 4. Cartel de reclutamiento estadounidense, H.R. Hopps. *Destroy this mad brute enlist, US Army*, 1917-1918.



Fig. 5. Cartel de propaganda británico, E.V. Kealey. *Women of Britain say- Go!*, 1915.

indefensa.”¹³⁴ Sin embargo, también había mensajes dirigidos hacia la mujer, como se aprecia en el cartel de propaganda británica *Women of Britain say- Go!* [Mujeres de Gran Bretaña digan- ¡Vayan!] (Fig. 5), donde el mensaje es muy claro: se exhortaba a la mujer a dejar ir a sus hombres para alcanzar un bien mayor, para cumplir ambos con su deber a pesar del riesgo que este implicaba.

El Reino Unido y los Estados Unidos compartieron muchas similitudes a la hora de representar a la mujer antes y durante la PGM y la SGM y, por ende, en la forma en la que ellas llevaron a cabo los trabajos tal y como se esperaba que lo hicieran. Durante la PGM, tanto las mujeres británicas como las estadounidenses tuvieron la oportunidad de involucrarse por primera vez en trabajos relacionados directamente con la guerra, si bien no a la escala en que lo hicieron durante la SGM. Estas nuevas tareas fueron representadas en varios carteles de propaganda que complementaban a aquéllos hechos para: crear conciencia sobre la importancia de racionar los recursos básicos como alimentos y

¹³⁴ Toby Clark. *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century.*, p. 108. “reiterate the dominant conception of masculinity as protective and femininity as defenseless”. T. A.

medicinas; para prevenir el espionaje ocasionado de forma voluntaria o no y para reclutar soldados debido al miedo a un ataque enemigo que pudieran sufrir sus mujeres por no ir a los campos de batalla. Estos mensajes e imágenes se repetirían durante el segundo conflicto mundial. En el caso británico, las mujeres aparecían representadas con los tipos característicos de la época, ejerciendo la labor a la que se les instaba y con leyendas que además de alentarlas al trabajo estaban cargadas con fuertes mensajes religiosos (Fig. 6). Otros carteles recalcaban la importancia y necesidad de la ayuda de la mano de obra femenina para alcanzar la pronta y tan ansiada victoria (Fig. 7), la cual venía prometiéndose desde los primeros meses del conflicto.



Fig. 6. Cartel de propaganda británico, Henry George Gawthorn. *Women's Land Army*.



Fig. 7. Cartel de propaganda británico, Public Record Office-Ministry of Munitions. *Women come and help!*, 1918.

En los carteles de propaganda estadounidenses, muchos de los cuales eran producidos por la YWCA,¹³⁵ la mujer comenzó a ser representada como una alternativa de

¹³⁵ La YWCA o *Young Women's Christian Association*, es una organización de carácter global que se originó en Inglaterra en 1855 y que en Estados Unidos existe desde 1858. Durante la PGM, esta organización en Estados Unidos fue de las primeras organizaciones en enviar trabajadoras entrenadas profesionalmente a Europa para proporcionar liderazgo y apoyo administrativo a las fuerzas armadas, además de que promovieron en el Home Front el trabajo y la mano de obra femeninos en la industria de guerra. Actualmente se dedica en este país a labores que buscan eliminar el racismo, a buscar el empoderamiento de la mujer y a promover la paz, la justicia, la libertad y la dignidad para todas las mujeres. Vide:

mano de obra voluntaria que no tenía por qué ser mal vista por la sociedad. La argumentación era muy concreta: era claro que las mujeres tenían que ocupar los trabajos de los varones ausentes porque su país se los demandaba como compatriotas para que al final de la batalla recuperaran a sus padres, hermanos, prometidos o esposos. Sus deseos de enlistarse voluntariamente estaban representados y apoyados por las imágenes en los carteles con leyendas como “Back our second line of defense” [Respalden nuestra segunda línea de defensa] (Fig. 8) o “For every fighter, a woman worker” [Por cada soldado, una mujer obrera] (Fig. 9) Esto demuestra que durante la PGM, un acontecimiento que convirtió la victoria contra el enemigo en una causa común del pueblo estadounidense, la desigualdad entre los sexos declaró una conveniente tregua en espera del fin del conflicto, justificando así los trabajos que la mujer llevó a cabo durante los cuatro años de combate durante la PGM y que, en gran medida, repetiría durante la SGM.¹³⁶

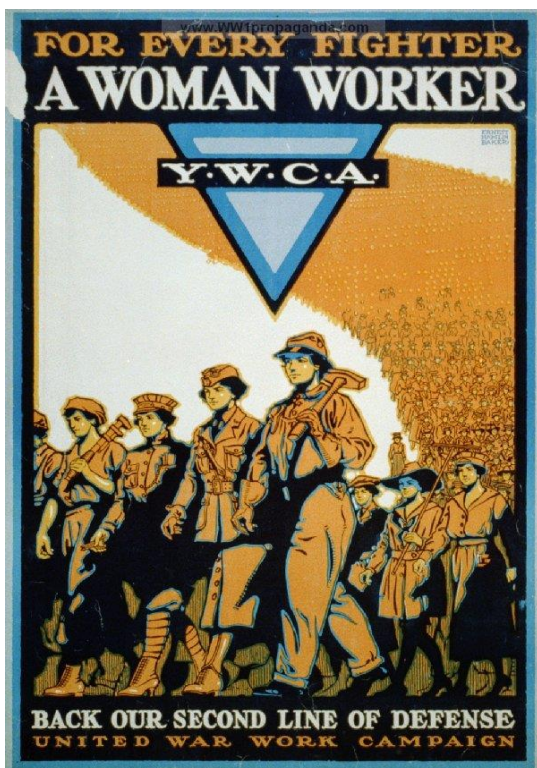


Fig. 8. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Ernest Hamlin Baker. For every fighter a woman worker., c. 1917



Fig. 9. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Adolph Trierler. For every fighter a woman worker., c. 1917.

http://www.ywca.org/site/c.cuIRJ7NtKrLaG/b.7515807/k.2737/YWCA__Eliminating_Racism_Empowering_Women.htm [Consulta 04/06/14].

¹³⁶ Renate Bridenthal. *op. cit.*, p. 474.

2.1.2. Antecedentes europeos y estadounidenses (1920-1940)

Las representaciones de la mujer “vieron un rápido cambio en las imágenes de las mujeres en los medios de comunicación, reflejando el cambio de los papeles de ellas en la sociedad”¹³⁷ con el final de la Gran Guerra y la llegada del tormentoso periodo de entreguerras, que marcó el inicio de los movimientos fascistas en Alemania, Italia y España, además de la consolidación del socialismo como el nuevo orden político, social e ideológico en la Unión Soviética y la Gran Depresión que azotaría económicamente el mundo entero.

Fue durante este periodo que surgió un nuevo modelo o idea de la feminidad. La pensadora feminista rusa Alexandra Kollontai la denominaría “la mujer nueva”.¹³⁸ Desde luego Kollontai usó este término en el contexto de la mujer que había adoptado los órdenes socialistas para librarse al fin de los viejos parámetros a los que estaba sujeta. La representación visual de “la mujer nueva” apareció y llenó infinidad de revistas, periódicos y películas de:

Imágenes de la mujer joven y soltera que tenía más libertades individuales que las generaciones pasadas. Descrita como una *flapper* en Gran Bretaña, una *garçonne* en Francia, y una *maschietta* en Italia, ella vestía vestidos a la altura de la rodilla, el cabello corto, y se hacía evidente en las calles y los cafés de las grandes ciudades.¹³⁹

En los demás países europeos y en los Estados Unidos, “la mujer nueva” estuvo presente en la figura de aquellas mujeres que comenzaron a usar vestidos holgados y llamativos, despidiéndose para siempre de los corsés y las demás indumentarias que recordaban a los gustos decimonónicos. Aquellas mujeres que al fin se dieron cuenta de que la sexualidad no se reducía a un mero fin reproductivo, sino que podía llegar a ser una actividad que ellas podían encontrar placentera y propia. Aquellas mujeres profesionistas y trabajadoras que además de ejercer una carrera o trabajar podían mantener sus labores familiares o “naturales”. Sin embargo, es importante señalar que esta imagen, esta representación de “la mujer nueva”, se redujo a un privilegio de las mujeres que contaban con las posibilidades económicas y sociales que les permitirían llevar este tipo de nueva vida,

¹³⁷ Toby Clark. *op. cit.*, p. 32. “saw rapidly shifting images of women in the media, reflecting the changing roles of women in society.” T. A.

¹³⁸ Renate Bridenthal. *op. cit.*, p. 492.

¹³⁹ June Hannam. “Power: Women, politics and power in Europe after 1920”. En: Liz Conor, ed. *A Cultural History of Women in the Modern Age.*, p. 146. “Images of the young single woman who had greater personal freedoms than previous generations. Described as a *flapper* in Britain, a *garçonne* in France, and a *maschietta* in Italy, she wore knee-length dresses, bobbed her hair, and was evident in the streets and cafés of large cities.” T. A.

por llamarlo así.¹⁴⁰ En realidad, como lo han argumentado historiadoras como Renate Bridenthal y Atina Grossman,

A pesar de mucha retórica acerca de los derechos y la liberación de la mujer, y a pesar de un imaginario visual coherente que celebraba a la mujer sexualmente libre y trabajadora, ningún cambio fundamental en los papeles tradicionales de la mujer es evidente [...] Al final, la imagen que prometía un nuevo mundo para la mujer moderna en la sociedad industrial del siglo XX existiría como una realidad únicamente para las mujeres ricas y privilegiadas. Mientras se filtraba a las masas de mujeres trabajadoras, funcionaba más y más como una fantasía, alejada de la realidad de la mayoría de la vida de las mujeres pero reafirmada con dificultad a través de las campañas en los medios de comunicación como canales para promover el consumo-- promoviendo la juventud, la belleza y el ocio junto con las últimas modas.¹⁴¹

2.1.2.1. Alemania

La idea de la “mujer nueva” estuvo presente en la Alemania de la República de Weimar, donde durante los primeros años de la década de 1920, la prensa y los medios en general mostraron un interés muy particular en esta figura transformada. “La mujer urbana, con un trabajo y salario que expresaba su independencia al usar pantalones y fumar cigarrillos en público o que participaba en deportes o en la experimentación sexual.”¹⁴² Pero una vez que la República se disolvió para dar paso al control absoluto de Adolf Hitler y su partido en la cima del poder, se establecieron dos formas particulares de representar y considerar el papel de la mujer dentro de la sociedad de la Alemania nazi. La primera de ellas era el de una mujer que aparecía constantemente rodeada por una especie de aura mística, casi sagrada, perfectamente de acuerdo a los lineamientos de la ideología del Reich que ejercía sus labores y su compromiso representando el papel de madre o esposa del hombre ario (Fig. 10) Para el nacionalsocialismo, el papel que la mujer debía ejercer dentro de la sociedad era muy específico: se reducía al de una mera proveedora, que entregaba voluntariamente a sus

¹⁴⁰ Esto era algo de lo que Virginia Woolf demandaba como habitación propia: “La libertad intelectual depende de cosas materiales. La poesía depende de la libertad intelectual. Y las mujeres siempre han sido pobres, no sólo durante doscientos años, sino desde el principio de los tiempos. Las mujeres han gozado de menos libertad intelectual que los hijos de los esclavos atenienses. Las mujeres no han tenido, pues, la menor oportunidad de escribir poesía. Por eso he insistido tanto sobre el dinero y sobre el tener una habitación propia.” Virginia Woolf, *Una habitación propia*, p. 77.

¹⁴¹ Whitney Chadwick. *op. cit.*, p. 278. “Despite much rhetoric about the rights and liberation of women, and despite a coherent visual imagery celebrating the sexually free working woman, no fundamental changes in women's traditional roles are evident [...] In the end, the image that promised a new world for the modern woman in the XX century industrial society would exist as a reality only for wealthy and privileged women. As it filtered to masses of working women, it functioned more and more as a fantasy, remote from the realities of most women's lives but strenuously asserted through media campaigns as a means to promote consumption-- dwelling youth, beauty, and leisure along with the latest fashions.” T. A.

¹⁴² Toby Clark. *op. cit.*, p. 33. “the urbanite with a salary who expressed her independence by wearing trousers and smoking cigarettes in public or engaging in sports and sexual experimentation.” T. A.

hijos al Reich. Era en ella donde estaba la clave de la continuación de la raza pura y suprema tan importante para Adolf Hitler, lo cual terminó por otorgarle a la fertilidad e instinto maternal de la mujer alemana una doble importancia porque en ella estaban “los medios para propagar la nación y para proveer la futura mano de obra masculina para la guerra y el trabajo” además de “la elevación espiritual de la maternidad, en la cual la fuerza femenina iba a ser medida mediante el sacrificio voluntario de sus hijos a la guerra.”¹⁴³ La imagen de una mujer llevando a un niño en brazos mientras lo alimentaba de su pecho era una de las más comunes y populares en las representaciones alemanas que se diseminaron por toda la nación en revistas, carteles de propaganda y en algunos casos en el cine (Fig. 11). Gracias a este tipo de imágenes y a la forma en la que era visto el papel de la mujer fue posible que muchas mujeres alemanas:

Aceptaran el elogio público de los líderes nazis y fascistas, las recompensas materiales, y los nuevos programas para la maternidad, esperando ingenuamente proteger a la familia. En realidad, los programas fascistas buscaban intervenir en la vida privada e imponer los valores fascistas en la toma de decisión individual.¹⁴⁴

A la mujer alemana se la instaba a unirse a organizaciones parecidas a las Juventudes Hitlerianas, como la Bund Deutscher Mädchen (BDM)¹⁴⁵ o la Frauenschaft¹⁴⁶ las cuales se ocupaban de entrenar a las mujeres dentro de las ideologías nazis de la misma forma en la que se hacía con los jóvenes, quienes con la llegada de la guerra se convertirían en soldados.

La segunda forma de representación, por otro lado, recordaba en cierta forma a la imagen de “la mujer nueva” que surgió durante los años veinte. Sin embargo, este modelo, según el nacionalsocialismo, no debía contar con las mismas libertades o con las mismas características, sino que la mujer debía ser colocada dentro del contraste y del conflicto entre “la misoginia neurótica que se encontraba a menudo en su retórica [del partido nazi], y la presencia dentro del movimiento de muchas mujeres activistas.”¹⁴⁷ Así, pues, la

¹⁴³ *Ídem.*, p. 70. “the spiritual elevation of maternity, in which female strength was to be measured by the willing sacrifice of children to war.” T. A.

¹⁴⁴ Renate Bridenthal, et. al. *op. cit.*, p. 499. “Accepted nazi and fascist leaders' public praise, material rewards, and new programs for motherhood, naively hoping to protect the family. In reality, fascist programs aimed at intervening in private life and imposing fascist values on individual decision making.” T. A.

¹⁴⁵ En inglés *League of German Girls* o *Band of German Maidens*, que se traduce como la Liga de Jóvenes Alemanas o Banda de Doncellas Alemanas.

¹⁴⁶ En inglés *National Socialist Women's League*, que se traduce en la Liga Nacionalsocialista Femenina, era el ala femenina del Partido Nazi, fundada en 1931.

¹⁴⁷ Toby Clark. *op. cit.*, p. 68. “the neurotic misogyny often found in its rhetoric, and the presence within the movement of many women activist.” T. A.

representación de los papeles que tenía la mujer alemana para el inicio de la guerra y durante ella vendrían a ser una contradicción entre los tradicionalismos de la madre y la familia, y la representación de la mujer trabajadora pero que se desenvolvía en áreas como la enfermería o la oficina. Pero incluso, más allá de estos ámbitos, como fue el caso de la cineasta Leni Riefenstahl, la mujer del Reich debía convertirse en un ejemplo perfecto y positivo de una profesionalista que alcanzaba sus metas únicamente dentro de los lineamientos nazis sobre cuáles eran los papeles reservados para ellas dentro de la sociedad.¹⁴⁸



Fig. 10. Portada de la revista *Frauen Woche*, 1938.



Fig. 11. Cartel de propaganda alemán. *Germany grows through strong mothers and healthy children*, 1935.

2.1.2.2. Italia

Por otro lado, la Italia fascista de Benito Mussolini compartía con el nacionalsocialismo alemán gran parte de la ideología sobre la clase de papel que la mujer debía ocupar dentro de la sociedad. Se consideraba el papel de la mujer como el de un ser reproductor, criador y encargado de ver por el bien del núcleo familiar, el pilar de ella y por ende de la nación misma. Si bien este papel exigía respeto y admiración, tampoco significaba el otorgamiento

¹⁴⁸ *Ídem.*, p. 68.

de libertades y oportunidades similares a las que tenían los hombres. Asimismo, tanto el totalitarismo italiano como el alemán, recurrieron a los mitos y tradiciones ancestrales de los romanos y los pueblos germánicos, respectivamente, no sólo para crear una imagen de adoración casi monolítica y megalómana alrededor de Adolf Hitler y Benito Mussolini, sino también para crear una imagen específica de la mujer. En el caso italiano, se trataría de epitomizar a las matronas romanas y a las diosas de la mitología. Representar a la mujer como un símbolo de la Patria-Nación y de la Victoria fue común en los medios y el arte italianos porque expresaba, precisamente, los elementos mitológicos, artísticos e históricos que el fascismo buscaba unir con el fin de adoctrinar a las masas.

Los carteles de propaganda, el resto de los medios de comunicación y el arte italianos mostraban imágenes de la mujer dirigidos hacia ellas mismas pero resultaban escasos si se las comparaba con el flujo de imágenes en Alemania, el Reino Unido y en Estados Unidos. De entre estas pocas representaciones de la mujer italiana se encontraban las que las mostraban comprometidas con las tareas que la nación esperaba y exigía de ellas (Fig. 12). En las revistas italianas, por ejemplo, se buscó que desde temprana edad las mujeres italianas estuvieran conscientes de la clase de papel que ocuparían dentro del régimen fascista, apuntando a su futuro como amas de casa, madres y esposas, excluyéndolas del “mundo de aventuras de los varones [...] las pequeñas italianas debían ser: mujercitas, juiciosas y solícitas en la realización de sus quehaceres de niñas.”¹⁴⁹ Con la guerra, surgió también una representación de la mujer como víctima de la invasión extranjera y del “barbarismo cultural” que atentaba no sólo en contra de ellas como meros individuos, sino como integrantes de una cultura milenaria y orgullosa de sí misma (Fig. 13).

Al final, todas las representaciones femeninas que surgieron durante los años de dominio fascista buscaron representar precisamente la ideología totalitaria del régimen, la cual era una Italia joven, guerrera, orgullosa, superior y dominante, destinada a la grandeza y conformada por una estirpe milenaria.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Laura Malvano., *op. cit.*, p. 339.

¹⁵⁰ *Ídem.*, pp. 326-328.



Fig. 12. Cartel de propaganda italiano. *Enlist in the Auxiliary Service of the X Flotilla MAS*, c. 1940.



Fig. 13. Cartel de propaganda italiano, Gino Boccasile. c. 1940.

2.1.2.3. Unión Soviética

La Unión Soviética, por otro lado, se encontraba en un periodo de cambio revolucionario. Al dejar atrás siglos de dominio zarista, comenzaba el nuevo siglo como lo hacía el resto del mundo: con grandes promesas y esperanzas. Éstas estaban particularmente fundadas en el orden socialista y la Revolución, mismas que permitirían, al menos en teoría, llevar a cabo un cambio verdadero en una sociedad que durante mucho tiempo se había caracterizado por ser inequitativa e injusta. Para las mujeres soviéticas significó una promesa en la reivindicación del lugar que ocupaban dentro de ésta. Un lugar que durante el dominio zarista se redujo a una posición determinada por un marcado autoritarismo dictado tanto por los valores rígidos y conservadores que promovía la iglesia ortodoxa, así como por la marcada división sexual en los trabajos que dejaban en claro una desigualdad de condiciones entre el hombre y la mujer.¹⁵¹ Antes de la Revolución, las mujeres se dividían entre aquellas quienes tenían la fortuna de haber nacido dentro de una familia acomodada, la cual les brindaba una

¹⁵¹ Richard Stites. "Women and the revolutionary process in Russia". En: Renate Bridenthal, et. al. *op. cit.*, p. 453.

especie de libertad con estudios en el extranjero o un matrimonio próspero; y aquellas que pertenecían al pueblo, al proletariado, campesinas o sirvientes, para quienes los cambios políticos o económicos siempre llegaban tarde y con lentitud.¹⁵² En la práctica, las condiciones para la mujer fueron muy diferentes, ya que poco cambió durante los años previos a la Revolución, durante los cuales hubo uno que otro brote de cambio gracias a los movimientos feministas, socialistas y radicales a favor de los derechos de las mujeres, o figuras como la de Alexandra Kollontai, quien se alzó como una voz que buscaba unir la lucha por los derechos de la mujer con el socialismo pero no dentro del feminismo porque lo consideraba un movimiento puramente burgués.¹⁵³ Después de la Revolución y hasta el inicio de la SGM, el papel de la mujer fue cambiando constantemente. Esto gracias a las posibilidades que, en teoría, le ofrecerían los experimentos políticos y sociales que llevaban a cabo los bolcheviques: mejores trabajos y salarios, políticas sobre el aborto y el control de la natalidad, reformas sobre el divorcio y libertad sexual. Todo lo anterior encaminado al logro de una estructura que pretendía establecer la igualdad entre los sexos.¹⁵⁴ Sin embargo, lo que en realidad existía dentro de la sociedad era una: “miseria endémica y pobreza material que obstaculizaba estos experimentos, y el cinismo y la indiferencia hacían de los sueños meras burlas [...] La vida para la mujer-- y para el hombre-- era muy difícil en los primeros años después de la Revolución.”¹⁵⁵

Los bolcheviques tomaron “las organizaciones que ayudaron a derrocar el viejo orden y que ayudarían a erigir el nuevo; arte, cultura, símbolo, y la visión mítica reforzarían los valores de la igualdad sexual.”¹⁵⁶ Por ende, las imágenes de la mujer que aparecieron durante los primeros años después de la Revolución, la mostraron en el objetivo que tenían los bolcheviques para el destino de la Unión Soviética. Durante los años veinte y treinta, muchas de las representaciones de la mujer siguieron el modelo del realismo socialista (Fig. 14) que insistía que “el poder de identificar y controlar la dirección de la progresión histórica, y por ende la correcta representación de la realidad, es de la propiedad exclusiva del Partido

¹⁵² *Ídem.*, p. 455.

¹⁵³ *Ídem.*, p. 457.

¹⁵⁴ *Ídem.*, p. 460.

¹⁵⁵ *Ídem.*, p. 462. “Endemic misery and material poverty hampered these experiments, and cynicism and indifference made mockeries of the dreams [...] Life for women-- and men-- was very difficult in the early years after the Revolution.” T. A.

¹⁵⁶ *Ídem.*, p. 460. “the organizations that helped overthrow the old order would help to erect the new one; art, culture, symbol, and mythic vision would reinforce the values of sexual equality.” T. A.

Comunista.”¹⁵⁷ En el contexto del realismo socialista surgió una “Hércules Femenina”, como una forma de representar un tipo ideal de la mujer comunista que rompía terminantemente con las imágenes de un ser frágil, delicado y grácil del siglo XIX, en cambio, a ellas se les mostraba fornidas y de complexión ancha, llevando a cabo tareas o trabajos que hasta entonces se habían considerado únicamente masculinos debido a lo arduo y pesado de sus demandas como en los casos de la producción eléctrica (Fig. 15), la construcción del metro (Fig. 16)



Fig. 14. Cartel de propaganda soviético, Adolf Strakhov. *Emancipated women, build up socialism!*, 1920.

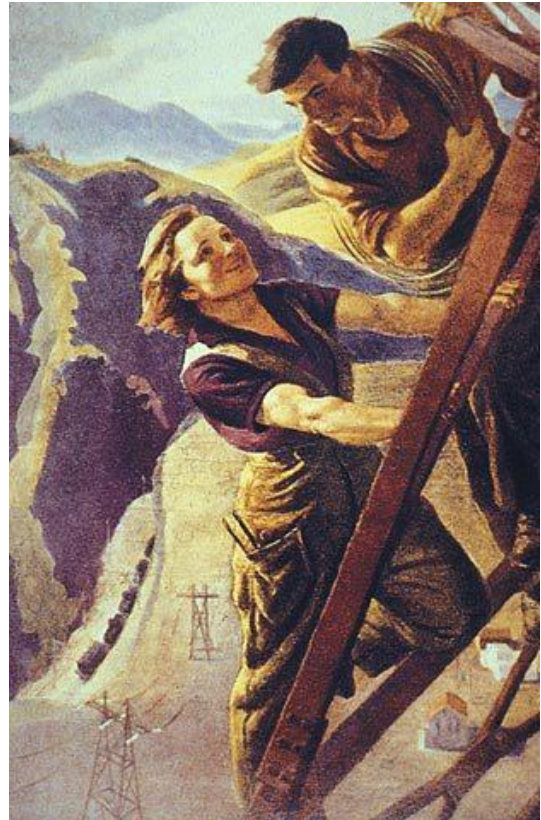


Fig. 15. Serafima Ryangina. *Higher and Higher*, 1934. Museo Estatal de Arte Ruso.

o ya durante la guerra, en una fábrica de municiones y bombas (Fig. 17). Por medio de medios como la prensa, la radio y el cine, se buscaba transmitir los ideales políticos socialistas a través de la representación del ciudadano y la ciudadana común, llevando a cabo tareas habituales pero otorgándole, además, una marcada connotación de heroísmo y compromiso, que enmarcaba la unión máxima entre el pueblo y el Estado.¹⁵⁸ Con la llegada

¹⁵⁷ Toby Clark. *op. cit.*, p. 87. “the power to identify and control the direction of this historic progression, and therefore the correct representation of reality, is the exclusive property of the Communist Party.” T. A.

¹⁵⁸ *Ídem.*, p. 87.

de la SGM, las mujeres soviéticas tuvieron la oportunidad de participar en el esfuerzo bélico de una forma más activa que las de los demás países involucrados. Las soviéticas, al contrario de las demás mujeres, estuvieron presentes en los frentes de batalla participando no únicamente como enfermeras sino como verdaderas combatientes. Eran conocidas como *frontovichkas* o “chicas de la línea del frente” y eran mujeres como Lyudmila Pavlichenko - francotiradora del ejército rojo con más de 300 victorias- o como Natalya Meklin –piloto de avión de combate con más de 900 misiones-. Como ellas, muchas mujeres tuvieron participación activa en la guerra, una participación que ha sido relegada de la historia oficial.

Esto demuestra el alcance de aquella clara y vieja tendencia que se puede trasladar a cualquier contexto en cual la mujer ha tenido alguna clase de participación inusual o que no corresponde a lo que se espera y se relaciona con su género.¹⁵⁹ En el contexto soviético, el mote de las “chicas de la línea del frente”, fue considerado como un insulto durante la posguerra.¹⁶⁰ Muchas de las mujeres que sirvieron como francotiradoras, enfermeras o radioperadoras fueron relegadas y denigradas de la sociedad cuando, durante la guerra, sufrieron y vivieron las mismas experiencias que muchos de los soldados.



Fig. 16. Aleksandr Samokhvalov. *Metro worker with drill*, 1937.



Fig. 17. Cartel de propaganda soviético, Alexei Kokorekin. *Weapons for the Home Front from the Soviet women*, 1942.

¹⁵⁹ Nicole Ann Dombrowski. *op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁰ Svetlana Alexievich. *War's Unwomanly Face.*, p. 115.

2.1.2.4. Reino Unido

Como se mencionó anteriormente, el Reino Unido, y por ende los países que conformaban la Commonwealth (Canadá, Australia, Nueva Zelanda, Sudáfrica, India), tuvieron muchas similitudes con los Estados Unidos en relación a la participación que tuvo la mujer dentro del esfuerzo de guerra y también en la forma de representarla durante la PGM, el periodo de entreguerras y finalmente durante la SGM. Las mujeres británicas y de la *Commonwealth* también acudieron a las fábricas para trabajar en la manufactura de aviones, tanques, municiones y demás mecanismos y equipo bélicos durante ambas guerras mundiales. Durante el periodo de entreguerras, también experimentaron los mismos cambios que sus contrapartes estadounidenses en cuanto al trabajo y a la vida cotidiana. Para el inicio de la SGM, “en el Reino Unido, 80 por ciento del incremento total en la fuerza de trabajo entre 1939 y 1943 eran mujeres que no habían sido empleadas fuera del hogar previamente; cerca de 2.5 millones de mujeres entraron en la fuerza de trabajo del Reino Unido durante la guerra.”¹⁶¹ En agosto de 1941, la revista *Life*, publicaría un artículo titulado “British women at war. They fill 2,000,000 jobs” [Las mujeres británicas en estado guerra. Ellas cubren 2,000,000 puestos de trabajo],¹⁶² el cual mostraba las actividades en las que las mujeres británicas estaban apoyando el esfuerzo de guerra en su país desde 1939. El reportaje de 8 páginas presentaba fotografías de mujeres en distintos papeles durante la guerra: amas de casa en Bristol que servían en un voluntariado de medio tiempo durante los bombardeos alemanes; vigías que identificaban aviones alemanes; reclutas del *Auxiliary Territorial Service*;¹⁶³ barrenderas que ayudaban a escombrar las calles londinenses después de los

¹⁶¹ Alan L. Gropman. *op. cit.*, p. 129. "In the United Kingdom, 80 percent of the total increase in the labor force between 1939 and 1943 were women who had not previously been employed outside the home; about 2.5 million women workers came into the United Kingdom labor force during the war." T. A.

¹⁶² “British women at war. They fill 2,000,000 jobs”. En: *Life*. Vol. 11. Agosto 4, 1941., pp. 70-80. *Vide*: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=jEwEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [Consulta 31/07/14]

¹⁶³ El *Auxiliary Territorial Service* (ATS), fue la rama femenina del ejército británico, cuyos orígenes están en varios otros cuerpos de voluntariado femenino que se crearon a lo largo de la PGM, como *Women's Volunteer Reserve* (1914), *The Women's Legion* (1915), y finalmente el *Women's Auxiliary Army Corps* (WAAC) [1917]. El ATS fue creado oficialmente en septiembre de 1938, y de ese momento en adelante se entrenaron en situaciones de contingencia y emergencia como una especie de preparación para la guerra que se avecinaba en Europa. Durante los primeros años de la guerra, las mujeres que pertenecieron al ATS llevaron a cabo tareas como cocineras, secretarías y tenderas pero con el desarrollo del conflicto ocuparon puestos como telefonistas, conductoras, mensajeras, inspectoras de municiones, operadoras de radar, policías militares y, en algunos casos, como integrantes del personal que se hacía cargo de los cañones antiaéreos. Tareas y trabajos que ayudaban a aliviar la escasez de personal debido al reclutamiento de hombres para el ejército, la marina y la fuerza aérea británicas. D. Collet Wadge. *Women in Uniform*. Imperial War Museum, 2003., p. 112. *Vide*: http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=P_514ENEHOIC&pg=PA114&dq=auxiliary+territorial+service&hl=en&sa=X&ei=td7aU5HpD6qD8QGjm4DgDg&ved=0CCEQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false [Consulta 08/09/14].

bombardeos; carteras que llevaban el correo en motocicleta; técnicas que daban mantenimiento a los aviones de la Real Fuerza Aérea; voluntarias del *Women's Land Army*,¹⁶⁴ soldando partes metálicas en las fábricas de tanques y cañones, o realizando tareas que aunque podían considerarse como tradicionales, marcaban la diferencia en tiempos difíciles: como limpiadoras de ventanas, lecheras, conductoras de autobuses, carniceras, mecánicas, herreras, repartidoras de lavandería y, más que nada, como ejemplos de cómo mantener la moral y el espíritu en alto. Estos reportajes pretendían servir como ejemplo para las mujeres estadounidenses, dándoles “una idea de lo que pueden hacer, en el caso de que los Estados Unidos vaya a la guerra”,¹⁶⁵ preparándolas para el conflicto que pronto tocaría a las puertas de la política no intervencionistas y aparentemente neutral del gobierno estadounidense, y familiarizándolas con los papeles y las actividades que dentro de pocos meses ellas mismas tendrían que llevar a cabo.

Las mujeres británicas y de la Commonwealth también se enlistaron en las ramas femeninas del ejército, de la fuerza aérea y de la marina. Entre las opciones que tenían estaban la *Women's Royal Naval Service*,¹⁶⁶ el *Auxiliary Territorial Service*, la *Women's Auxiliary Air Force*¹⁶⁷ y estaban los *Women's Services* de Australia, Canadá, Nueva Zelanda y Sudáfrica. La propaganda del Reino Unido y de la Commonwealth utilizó imágenes y mensajes para alentar a la mujer a unirse a las fábricas (Fig. 18) o al ejército/fuerza aérea/marina (Fig. 19). Así, de la misma forma como harían los estadounidenses, estos carteles buscaban “disimular los conflictos sociales causados por el reclutamiento de las mujeres en el trabajo de guerra industrial”,¹⁶⁸ con imágenes que mostraban a la mujer en

¹⁶⁴ El *Women's Land Army* fue una organización civil que tanto durante la PGM como durante la SGM, llevó a cabo tareas de carácter agrícola para mantener la producción y la economía del campo. *Vide: Ídem*, p. 150.

¹⁶⁵ *Life*. Agosto 4, 1941. *op. cit.*, p. 71. “idea of what they can do, should the US go to war.” T. A.

¹⁶⁶ El *Women's Royal Naval Service (WREN)* se estableció como la rama femenina de la marina real británica en 1917 para ser disuelta en 1919, volver a ser establecida en 1939, unos meses antes de iniciada la SGM y finalmente, ser integrada por completo a la marina real en 1993. Sus tareas eran parecidas a las que llevaron a cabo las integrantes del *ATS*: cocineras, inspectoras de aviones, cargadoras de baterías, meteorólogas, electricistas, ingenieras, mecánicas, radio operadoras, analistas, telegrafistas, etc. *Vide: D. Collet Wadge. op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁶⁷ La *Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF)* también tuvo sus orígenes en un cuerpo femenino que se creó durante la PGM: la *Women's Royal Air Force* (1918). Establecida en julio de 1939, la WAAF tenía como objetivo, al igual que todas las demás fuerzas femeninas militares, sustituir a los hombres activos para servir en el frente. A pesar de que no fueron consideradas aptas para el servicio activo, sus tareas y trabajos, conllevaron los peligros del *home front* británico. Entre estas tareas estaban el mantenimiento de paracaídas y de los globos de barrera como una medida contra los ataques aéreos. También tenían trabajos de mantenimiento de aviones, transporte y batería anti-aérea; lo mismo fungieron como meteorólogas, operadoras de radar, telegrafistas, telefonistas inalámbricas, además de que se involucraron en trabajos de análisis de información de inteligencia, como los códigos, los sistemas de cifrado y las fotografías de reconocimiento. *Vide: Ídem.*, pp. 172-174.

¹⁶⁸ Toby Clark. *op. cit.*, p. 110. “conceal the social conflicts caused by the recruitment of women to industrial war

poses casi heroicas y con mensajes que buscaban alentarla: “She serves that men may fly” (Ella sirve para que los hombres puedan volar); “Serve in the *WAAF* with the men who fly” (Sirve en la *WAAF* con los hombres que vuelan); “Join the *WRENS* and free a man for the fleet” (Únete a las *WRENS* y libera a un hombre para la flota); “You are wanted too! Join the *ATS*” (¡Tú también eres necesaria! Únete al *ATS*) o “Keep the farms going while men are fighting. Join the *Women’s Land Army*” (Mantén las granjas en movimiento mientras los hombres pelean. Únete al *Women’s Land Army*), entre otros más.

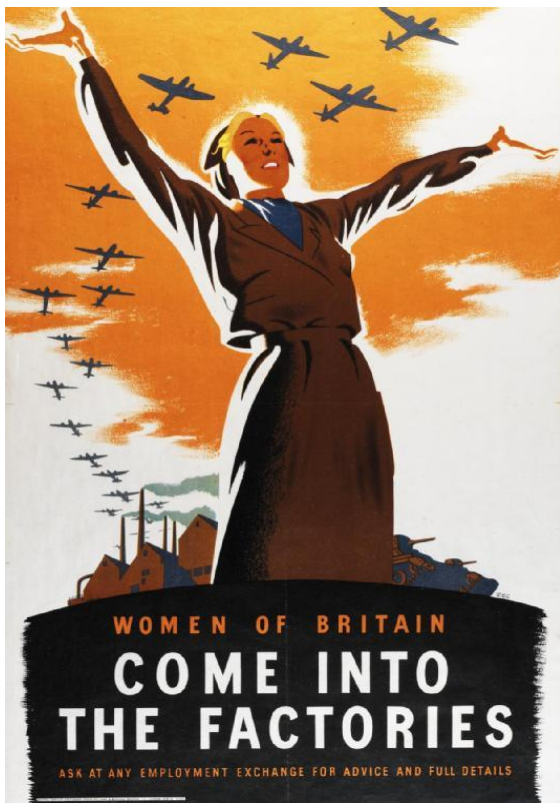


Fig. 18. Cartel de propaganda británico, Phillip Zec. *Women of Britain come into the factories*, 1941.



Fig. 19. Cartel de propaganda canadiense, Ted Harris. *She serves that men may fly. Enlist today in the RCAF*, c.1940.

2.1.2.5. Estados Unidos

Al igual que en los países europeos, en Estados Unidos la imagen de la “mujer nueva” comenzó a introducirse en su imaginario visual después de la PGM, durante la década de los veinte y los primeros años de los treinta. Era la imagen de una mujer liberada que comenzaría a aparecer en las películas, en las revistas de moda, en el arte incluso. En el cine estadounidense, por ejemplo, esta imagen, anterior al establecimiento del Código Hays -

work.” T. A.

el cual censuraba contenidos como el sexo, las malas palabras y otros temas tabú-, rompió con los estereotipos que se utilizaban en muchas de las producciones del cine mudo. Los personajes de la chica ingenua, la mujer caída en desgracia o la santa fueron reemplazadas definitivamente. “Ya no más estereotipos, estas mujeres en pantalla se volvieron complicadas. Esta combinación de sensualidad, independencia y alegría, las hizo fascinantes de ver y completamente modernas.”¹⁶⁹ Fueron imágenes que provocaron una especie de rompimiento con las generaciones pasadas, con las tradiciones y convencionalismos que mantenían a la mujer atada a ideales y patrones de comportamiento que indudablemente heredaban de sus madres, sus abuelas y demás figuras femeninas del siglo XIX. Las actrices de lo que se denomina “la era Pre-Código” -como Jean Harlow, Clara Bow, Barbara Stanwyk, Mae West, Marlene Dietrich, Miriam Hopkins, Ann Dvorak y Norma Shearer- se convirtieron en símbolos que alarmaron a toda una sociedad precisamente por estas razones:

Norma Shearer ha matado a nuestras abuelas. Ella ha matado lo que ellas defendían. Ella ha asesinado a la vieja Mujer Buena. Ella ha incinerado el mito de que los hombres jamás se casarían con “esa clase de mujer”. Ella ha abolido “esa clase de mujer”. Ahí permanecerán - como almas libres.¹⁷⁰

Es importante precisar que este tipo de representaciones no significaron que la mujer cambiara de la noche a la mañana los papeles que ocupaba dentro de la sociedad, es decir, que a pesar de que surgieron nuevas representaciones, la mujer continuó ejerciendo a grandes rasgos las tareas y los patrones de conducta que en teoría estaban siendo derribados. Esto demuestra que la mujer, en la vida real, lejos del mundo idílico del celuloide o del papel, continuó jugando muchos de los roles de siempre y que las nuevas representaciones culturales no influyeron más allá para crear alguna clase de conciencia que diera pie al cambio en la mentalidad que ellas tenían sobre sí mismas dentro de la sociedad.

Al aventurarse en nuevas áreas de trabajo, las mujeres no sólo lograron tener oportunidades novedosas sino también nuevas responsabilidades y obligaciones. Pero al mismo tiempo surgieron contradicciones que de igual forma minaron y ayudaron a los caminos que la mujer estaba construyendo y recorriendo en favor de sus derechos dentro de

¹⁶⁹ Mick LaSalle. *Complicated Women: Sex and Power in Pre-code Hollywood.*, p. 55. “No longer stereotypes, these screen women had become complicated. This combination of sensuality, independence and playfulness, made them fascinating to watch and completely modern.” T. A.

¹⁷⁰ Crítica a la película *A Free Soul* de Clarence Brown. *Motion Picture Magazine*, 1932. “Norma Shearer has killed our grandmothers. She has killed what they stood for. She has murdered the old-time Good Woman. She has cremated the myth that men will never marry ‘that kind of woman.’ She has abolished ‘that kind of woman.’ There remain - free souls.” T. A.

la sociedad. Las nuevas esperanzas que habían venido con la guerra desaparecieron un poco al encontrarse con las duras y represivas políticas del fascismo y la Gran Depresión. Pero también estaban aquellos viejos adversarios: los prejuicios, los estereotipos, el miedo al cambio, la hostilidad, no sólo de su contraparte masculina, sino también de ellas mismas. Podemos ejemplificar esta idea con la forma en la que “las realidades de la Depresión promovieron un modelo en la femineidad que enfatizaba los papeles domésticos de educadora a cargo de los hijos de las mujeres, que contrastaron agudamente con la imagen de independencia promovida durante los años veinte.”¹⁷¹

Precisamente, durante los tiempos de la Gran Depresión y con el alarmante aumento del desempleo, quienes se vieron mayormente afectados fueron los obreros. Mucha de la fuerza de trabajo masculina, al concentrarse mayormente en industrias “pesadas” como la construcción y la fabricación de cualquier tipo de maquinaria, sufrió las consecuencias de la crisis capitalista global,¹⁷² al contrario de los trabajos que se consideraban exclusivamente femeninos, tales como los que tenían que ver con “el sector de los servicios que crecía rápidamente y que incluía una amplia variedad de ocupaciones esenciales para una economía moderna: transporte, comunicaciones, trabajo de oficina y de ventas, trabajo social...”¹⁷³ Además, se dio la profesionalización de aquellas actividades que venían siempre inherentes al sexo femenino y que representaban sus funciones tradicionales dentro del núcleo familiar, tales como la administración, la educación y el cuidado de la salud, que sin embargo, le ofrecieron a una minoría de mujeres oportunidades dentro de la nueva economía moderna.¹⁷⁴ En este periodo de confusión y declive económico, la comunión entre los géneros dentro de los ámbitos laborales sufrió una especie de inestabilidad y la tregua entre ellos terminó por completo gracias a que en gran medida fueron los hombres quienes padecieron más el desempleo que las mujeres. Durante los años de la Gran Depresión, el miedo velado a que las mujeres se apoderaran lentamente de los trabajos del hombre, que lo desplazaran definitivamente de aquellas labores que “naturalmente” le pertenecían y que su papel como proveedor fuera tomado por la que hasta ese entonces se ocupaba únicamente del papel de protectora del hogar, se hizo muy presente y las hostilidades entre géneros se

¹⁷¹ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 4. “The realities of the Depression promoted a model of womanhood that emphasized women’s domestic and nurturing role and contrasted sharply with the image of independence promoted during the 1920s.” T. A.

¹⁷² Renate Bridenthal. *op. cit.*, p. 484.

¹⁷³ *Ídem.*, p. 485. “The fast-growing service sector included a wide variety of occupations essential to a modern economy: transport, communications, office and sales work, social work...” T. A.

¹⁷⁴ *Ídem.*, p. 487.

reflejaron en los conflictos que enfrentaron sindicatos y patrones, pues de pronto no supieron dónde ubicar a las mujeres trabajadoras y demostraron renuencia a que la mujer se uniera a fuerzas de trabajo consideradas como exclusivamente “masculinas”. Abogar por la creación de legislaciones que protegieran a la mujer dentro del trabajo o que le otorgaran salarios iguales a los de los hombres tampoco estaba dentro de las prioridades, ya que al fin y al cabo, la contratación de la mano de obra femenina fue, durante mucho tiempo, un recurso utilizado convenientemente para reducir costos.

Estaba también la presencia de aquellas mujeres que se consideraban a sí mismas como “antifeministas” o las que luchaban por mantener los valores tradicionales y se resistían al cambio. Estas mujeres también jugaron un papel muy importante en el rechazo a las nuevas oportunidades que surgieron para la mujer. Y es que resistirse a ser llamadas “feministas” era simplemente una forma de expresar el rechazo y la desconfianza que esta palabra significaba para muchas mujeres, apoyaran o no los ideales y objetivos que los movimientos feministas buscaban conseguir para beneficio de la transformación de la mujer dentro de la sociedad. La razón era simple: el hecho de considerarse o ser considerada “feminista” era muy mal visto por la sociedad. A pesar de esto, existieron mujeres que hicieron activismo y se llamaron feministas, así como también las hubo que no se consideraron como tal y llevaron a cabo o se interesaron por las actividades en favor del cambio social. Caitriona Beaumont aclara que “a pesar de que algunas organizaciones femeninas se negaron explícitamente a etiquetarse como feministas, aun así deberían ser vistas como una parte importante del movimiento para mejorar la posición social y económica de la mujer.”¹⁷⁵

De pronto, durante el periodo de entreguerras, específicamente a mediados de la década de 1930, la aparición de la “mujer nueva” y todo lo que ella englobó en algún momento, es decir los nuevos trabajos y nuevas oportunidades, fue reemplazada por un pesimismo que se vio reflejado en un cambio en la mentalidad de la sociedad con respecto a la mujer. El entorno era el siguiente, según un comentario de una alumna universitaria del Vassar College en Nueva York¹⁷⁶ en 1934:

¹⁷⁵ June Hannam. *op., cit.*, p. 153. “although some women’s organizations explicitly refused the label feminist, they should be seen as an important part of the movement to improve women’s social and economic position”. T. A.

¹⁷⁶ En la enciclopedia de alumnos destacados del Vassar College, aparece la figura de Nancy Harkness Love, aviadora amateur y de las pocas mujeres en ese entonces con una licencia de piloto comercial que se graduó en esta universidad con títulos de francés e Historia de Francia. Durante la SGM, se unió a Jacqueline Cochran

Hace veinte años, todos creímos en la independencia económica de las mujeres. La domesticidad se observó con impaciencia... todas esperamos tener carreras y todas esperamos ser distinguidas... era parte de la doctrina de que debíamos casarnos y tener hijos, pero que estos incidentes no deben interponerse en el camino de nuestro trabajo. El matrimonio no interfiere con el trabajo de un hombre. Una mujer también, debería tener una vida personal rica y una carrera pública útil.¹⁷⁷

Para inicios de los treinta, apareció una nueva clase de temor que se fundaba en la renuencia a aceptar que la mujer se desarrollara dentro de nuevos parámetros. Había temor a una posible baja en la tasa de natalidad debido al trabajo de mujeres casadas y con hijos. También se pensaba que el trabajo femenino provocaría la delincuencia juvenil y que la desatención del hogar traería consigo la desintegración familiar. Además se temía tanto la falta de una figura materna como la aparición repentina de mujeres “masculinizadas” que podían conducir a un cambio o transformación de los papeles de cada género.¹⁷⁸ En resumen, la década anterior al inicio de la SGM marcó una necesidad de la sociedad por volver a buscar o por redescubrir el papel “normal” o “natural” de la mujer, lo que ocasionó que todos los sueños y las esperanzas que mencionó aquella alumna de Vassar terminaran por ser abandonados completamente, por lo que:

Para toda la charla de una “mujer nueva”, el periodo de entreguerras conservó mucho de lo que era viejo. No tan restrictivo como en el pasado o permisivo como en el futuro, proporcionó un tenue puente entre ellos. Incertidumbre acerca de los papeles de género que provocaron ansiedad, lo que a su vez condujo a una reacción. Cuando la mujer se volvió más visible en la fuerza de trabajo, cuestionando la división sexual del trabajo y difuminando las líneas de género en la mente popular, los expertos se movilizaron para poner las cosas en orden otra vez. El breve coqueteo con la androginia simbolizada por las *flappers* con aspecto de muchacho terminó pronto con un firme y nuevo compromiso con la diferencia de género. Con la Depresión, la bien redondeada figura femenina reapareció en los medios de comunicación. Un nuevo papel de madre y esposa subrayó las virtudes domésticas basadas en un mayor consumismo, un auge para los mercados capitalistas en expansión. Las economías del hogar reclamaron el estatus de una ciencia y dignificaron al ama de casa como una experta, a pesar de que la mujer trabajadora aún tenía que arreglárselas entre la labor fuera y dentro de casa. En vísperas de la SGM, la imagen era clara: la mujer era mujer otra vez, su género cuidadosamente reconstruido para los tiempos modernos.¹⁷⁹

para formar el grupo de mujeres piloto conocido como WASP. Al respecto del papel de la mujer en el esfuerzo de guerra y sobre si las mujeres podrían ser buenas piloteando aviones, ella declaró: “Sujetas a los mismos requisitos que los hombres, sí, pero muchas mujeres no están calificadas física y temperamentalmente... al igual que muchos hombres”. *Vide:* <http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/alumni/nancy-love.html> [Consulta 6/04/15]

¹⁷⁷ Carl N. Degler. *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present*, p. 414. “Twenty years ago we all believed in the economic independence of women. Domesticity was regarded with impatience... we all expected to have careers and we all hoped to be distinguished... it was part of the doctrine that we should marry and have children, but that these incidents should not stand in the way of our work. Marriage does not interfere with a man's work. A woman too, should have both a rich personal life and a useful public career.” T. A.

¹⁷⁸ Renate Bridenthal. *op., cit.*, pp. 484-485.

¹⁷⁹ *Ídem.*, p. 494. “For all the talk of a 'new woman', the interwar period kept much that was old. Not quite as

En el siguiente apartado nos ocuparemos de explicar brevemente las razones por las cuales, el gobierno norteamericano necesitó de una técnica y un despliegue propagandísticos sin precedentes para convencer a la opinión pública de que la entrada a la guerra era una necesidad; además del papel que las mujeres jugaron en este despliegue propagandístico como reflejo de la necesidad que se tuvo de ellas a favor del esfuerzo de guerra en el *home front* estadounidense.

2.2. La contribución y representación de las mujeres en la propaganda estadounidense (1941-1945)

En ambos conflictos armados, tanto en la PGM como en la SGM, Estados Unidos declaró la guerra cuando el conflicto estaba en progreso. También, en ambos casos, la mayoría de la sociedad estaba a favor de la no intervención, de ahí la necesidad que tuvo el gobierno de cambiar el escepticismo social por una confianza en las fuerzas armadas y el gobierno. También se buscó propiciar el temor y el odio al enemigo. Los temas más recurrentes en las imágenes de propaganda desde que Estados Unidos entró a la guerra inmediatamente después del ataque a Pearl Harbor fueron precisamente los que favorecían los sentimientos de odio hacia el enemigo. El ataque a la base naval del Pacífico, particularmente, marcó un antes y un después en la opinión pública sobre si debía intervenir o no en el conflicto, y en cierta forma, benefició el cambio de una actitud puramente no intervencionista a una activamente belicista. Por ejemplo, mucha de la propaganda que apareció inmediatamente después del ataque buscaba despertar un sentimiento de venganza contra Japón. Durante la guerra, el estadounidense siempre mostró más resentimiento contra el japonés que contra el alemán, a quien de alguna u otra forma, consideraba un igual en comparación con la confusión que siempre le provocaron las tradiciones, ideologías e incluso, la apariencia física del japonés. La propaganda relacionada al ataque a Pearl Harbor mostraba al Tío Sam liderando a las tropas en un contraataque con banderas estadounidenses que ondeaban

restrictive as in the past or as permissive as in the future, it provided a tenuous bridge between them. Uncertainty about gender roles created anxiety, which in turn led to reaction. When women became more visible in the labor force, putting the sexual division of labor into question and blurring gender lines in the popular mind, experts mobilized to set things right again. The brief flirtation with androgyny symbolized by the boyish flapper soon ended with a firm recommitment to gender difference. With the Depression, the well-rounded female figure reappeared in the mass media. A new mother and wife role stressed domestic virtues based on heightened consumerism, a boom for expanding capitalist markets. Home economics claimed the status of a science and dignified the housewife as an expert, although the working woman still had to juggle job and home making. On the eve of WWII, the image was clear: a woman was a woman again, her gender carefully reconstructed for modern times." T. A.

destrozadas. Gran parte de esta propaganda abusó de la famosa frase “Remember Pearl Harbor” como un recordatorio del deber que todos tenían como sociedad, ejército y gobierno para emprender la guerra contra el Imperio japonés como una represalia por el sorpresivo ataque.

La propaganda de los años siguientes seguiría esta misma línea de discurso, en los carteles de reclutamiento, en los de recaudación de bonos de guerra, en los noticieros que se proyectaban antes de las películas, en las películas de propaganda producidas por el gobierno o en las fotografías que aparecían en revistas como *Life*, *Collier's* o *The Saturday Evening Post*. La propaganda estadounidense consistió en una mezcla de deber y venganza. Pero, ¿quién o quiénes se hacían cargo de producir la propaganda en Estados Unidos?, ¿era el gobierno estadounidense el único encargado de la propaganda o también estaban involucrados organismos del sector privado como empresas o individuos con intereses muy particulares en la guerra?, y, la pregunta más importante, ¿quiénes se hicieron cargo de la propaganda dirigida hacia la mujer?

En Estados Unidos la línea que separara la propaganda de la publicidad es clara y muy bien delimitada. Siempre han tenido una cultura de la publicidad, de la cual se proclaman expertos y de la cual están orgullosos porque es efectiva y vasta. La publicidad en la Unión Americana:

Literalmente creció diciéndole a América qué hacer: cómo comportarse, dónde vivir, qué vestir, con quién asociarse; y la fraternidad de la publicidad siempre ha imaginado que el significado de estas instrucciones trascendería lo meramente económico [...] En resumen, la publicidad se ha convertido en la fuerza intelectual básica de la vida americana, tan poderosa, se ha sugerido, como la escuela y la Iglesia.¹⁸⁰

La propaganda, al contrario, y más la que proviene del gobierno, tiende a ser recibida con recelo. Así sucedió durante la PGM, cuando se estableció el Comité Creel de forma improvisada y rápida, el cual se hizo cargo de la producción propagandística y al que se terminó acusando de manipular y falsear información para crear una especie de histeria colectiva con respecto a la guerra que se desarrollaba en Europa.¹⁸¹ También sucedió así durante la SGM, con la sociedad y la opinión pública mayormente en contra de una

¹⁸⁰ Frank W. Fox. *Madison Avenue Goes to War. The Strange Military Career of American Advertising. 1941-1945.*, p. 3. “Literally grew up telling America what to do: how to behave, where to live, what to wear, whom to associate with; and the advertising fraternity has always imagined that the import of these instructions transcends the merely economic. [...] In sum, advertising has become a basic intellectual force in American life, as powerful, it has been suggested, as the school and the church.” T. A.

¹⁸¹ Maureen Honey. *Creating Rosie the Riveter. Class, Gender and Propaganda during World War II.*, p. 30.

intervención y con un aparato propagandístico desordenado y casi inexistente.

La propaganda estadounidense de la SGM mantuvo al principio muchos de los modelos y lineamientos que le dejó la PGM. Pero con el avance de la guerra la gran parte de la producción propagandística comenzó a estar en manos de la OIG,¹⁸² a diferencia de Alemania, donde el control total de la propaganda estuvo a cargo de una sola persona: Joseph Goebbels. Con el establecimiento de la OIG, la propaganda estadounidense eventualmente alcanzaría niveles que podrían compararse con los de la Alemania nazi en objetivos y metas pero que a diferencia de ésta, y según *Life*, “se apega a los hechos, evade exageraciones, trata de brindarles a las personas del mundo mensajes sobre nuestros líderes, nuestros objetivos bélicos, nuestro creciente poderío armado.”¹⁸³ Esto es digno de hacerlo notar, porque en el intercambio propagandístico entre el Eje y los Aliados, esta postura fue la carta preferida con la cual cada uno apostó para mantener el funcionamiento de sus respectivas máquinas propagandísticas y todo lo que estas implicaban. Lo cual demuestra que, sea en un contexto bélico o en uno pacífico, la propaganda propia es “buena” y “verdadera” mientras que la del adversario es “mala” y “falsa”.

Pero el enemigo de la OIG no sólo era la propaganda proveniente del Eje, sino también la falta de moral y el escepticismo con la que se topó a inicios de la guerra. Otros problemas tuvieron que ver con la organización y logística que implicó centralizar todos los departamentos, comités y agencias que se encargaban de la información de guerra en una sola oficina, la cual debió lidiar continuamente con las rencillas internas y la competencia que encontró con la Oficina de Servicios Estratégicos¹⁸⁴ a la hora de “ganar la atención del presidente, quien no mejoró el asunto al concederles privilegios que resultaron vagos al definir sus respectivas esferas de autoridad.”¹⁸⁵

A grandes rasgos, la OIG se encargó entre otros asuntos de:

1. Coordinar con las editoriales periodísticas el contenido visual para las portadas de las

¹⁸² *Vide* nota 8. La OIG son las siglas de la Oficina de Información de Guerra (*OWI, Office of War Information*, en inglés)

¹⁸³ “US is losing the war of words”. En: *Life*. Vol. 14. Marzo 22, 1943., p. 11. “sticks to facts, shuns exaggerations, tries to bring the peoples of the world messages about our leaders, our war aims, our growing armed might.” T. A. *Vide*: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=KVEEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [Consulta 10/10/14].

¹⁸⁴ La Oficina de Servicios Estratégicos (*OSS*, por sus siglas en inglés, *Office of Strategic Services*) es considerada predecesora de la CIA. Durante la SGM, fue la encargada de los llevar a cabo los servicios de inteligencia que se encargaban de la investigación y la difusión de la información clasificada.

¹⁸⁵ Anthony Rhodes. *op. cit.*, p. 144. “gain the ear of the president, who did not improve matters by granting them charters which were vague in defining their respective spheres of authority.” T. A.

revistas o de las primeras planas de la prensa. En 1943, por ejemplo, se encargaron de que estos medios impresos mostraran particularmente imágenes de mujeres trabajando en el *home front*.

2. Establecer oficinas en ciudades extranjeras aliadas como Londres o Sídney con el fin de coordinar el flujo de información que ayudaría a apoyar la causa, además de buscar la unión entre los países aliados.
3. Distribuir en otros países aliados contenidos acerca del esfuerzo de guerra estadounidense a través de la realización de programas y cápsulas radiofónicas y fílmicas.
4. Mantener estrechas relaciones con las cadenas más importantes de radio y con los estudios más grandes de Hollywood para crear contenidos que apoyaran la causa pero también para que se establecieran ciertos parámetros sobre lo que se debía difundir o no en los programas o en las películas.
5. Establecer durante los primeros años del conflicto un cerrado cerco de censura de contenidos relacionados particularmente con las imágenes que provenían del frente y que mostraban soldados muertos por fuego amigo o en condiciones poco heroicas para después, una vez que el transcurso de la guerra se prolongó, utilizarlas para aumentar la moral entre la sociedad.¹⁸⁶

Ahora bien, adentrándonos en el tema de la propaganda dirigida a la mujer, recordemos que la mujer estadounidense ya había formado parte del trabajo en las industrias de guerra y, por ende, en la propaganda que promovía su integración en esta fuerza de trabajo durante la PGM. Sin embargo, fue durante los años que duró la SGM que estos trabajos, estos papeles y esta propaganda no sólo se repetirían sino que cobrarían un nuevo significado y tendrían nuevos alcances.

A medida que la mayoría de la población masculina comenzó a dejar vacantes en puestos de trabajos en la industria, el campo, los servicios públicos para enlistarse en el ejército y que las fábricas cambiaron su producción habitual por la producción bélica, se hizo necesario empezar a considerar nuevamente la posibilidad de acudir a la mano de obra femenina como se había hecho anteriormente. Dado el cambio en las circunstancias de la mujer a lo largo del periodo de entreguerras, como se desarrolló en la primera parte del presente capítulo, la propaganda necesitó de nuevos mensajes que inspiraran no sólo a las

¹⁸⁶ Vide: Gerd Horten. *op., cit.*, p. 6, Simon J. Potter. *op., cit.*, p. 134-135 y George Roeder. *op., cit.*, p. 82.

mujeres solteras sino también a las casadas y con hijos, a las recién graduadas, a las viudas de guerra, a las mujeres blancas, negras o de origen inmigrante.

Durante la guerra, la propaganda en el *home front* se dio a la tarea de llamar a todas las mujeres posibles para lograr la victoria. Esta tarea fue posible porque se hacía ver que los cambios en los límites entre los géneros iban a efectuarse solamente “mientras durara la guerra”.¹⁸⁷ Esto pretendía evitar los temores que producían en gran parte de la sociedad el hecho de que las líneas que dividían los géneros comenzaran a difuminarse. Por ende, mediante el uso de la propaganda se pretendió mantener o proteger “el tradicional papel femenino” de las mujeres que eventualmente se integrarían a la fuerza de trabajo o que serían reclutadas voluntariamente en el ejército. Se trataba de asegurar que las mujeres no dejarían de ser femeninas, ni que por realizar esa clase de trabajos descuidaran las tareas que eran “naturales” en ellas como el cuidado del hogar, los hijos y la familia.¹⁸⁸ También se trataba de asegurarle a la sociedad de que nada cambiaría el *estatus* no sólo respecto a las mujeres, sino también en referencia a los afroamericanos e inmigrantes que, aunque también formaron parte de esta fuerza de trabajo, eran grupos marginados en un contexto no belicista. Esto demuestra que si las mujeres como género encontraron en su camino discriminación, desigualdad y hostilidad por parte de grupos conservadores, una peor situación fue la que vivieron algunas de ellas a causa de su origen étnico. Las mujeres afroamericanas y las de reciente migración, fuera este hispano u oriental, enfrentaron problemas que ya no sólo se limitaban a la discriminación de género, sino a la segregación étnica como veremos en el capítulo 3.

La propaganda y las representaciones de la mujer entre los años de 1941 a 1945 mostraron una tendencia muy clara. Se cuidaron los elementos estereotipados de la mujer que la caracterizaban como miembro del sexo femenino a pesar de llevar a cabo labores que se consideraban puramente masculinas. Así, en la propaganda, se mostraban imágenes de mujeres que no perdían su feminidad por el hecho de trabajar en fábricas para remachar, perforar y soldar con máquinas, o por vestir uniformes militares que hasta hacía poco sólo se asociaban con los hombres. Se representaba a la mujer en una situación que ya había ocupado con anterioridad, pero también en una posición que pretendía enfatizar en la figura de una mujer fuerte pero que cuidaba de aquellos elementos relativos a lo femenino como las faldas, el maquillaje, los zapatos o la forma de peinarse.

¹⁸⁷ Toby Clark., *op. cit.*, p. 110. También en David M. Kennedy y Susan Hartman.

¹⁸⁸ Maureen Honey. *op. cit.*, p. 28.

Por ende, ¿cuáles eran los intereses de la OIG y del gobierno y los intereses auténticos de las mujeres con respecto a la propaganda?, ¿estaban estos últimos representados en la propaganda? En cuanto a esto, es indudable el hecho de que en la concepción y producción de la propaganda dirigida hacia la mujer, la cantidad real de mujeres involucradas fue muy baja. La gran mayoría de carteles eran diseñados por ilustradores y fotógrafos varones. La OIG y sus oficinas y departamentos subordinados eran dirigidos por hombres. El fenómeno de la representación femenina a través del ojo, el gusto y la mano masculinos ha sido estudiado en el contexto de las bellas artes como en los trabajos de Whitney Chadwick y Carol Duncan. Ambas investigadoras, utilizando un enfoque feminista, han estudiado la representación de la mujer a lo largo del proceso artístico llegando a la conclusión de que en gran parte de él las imágenes femeninas son el resultado de los parámetros dictados únicamente por la mirada masculina y, por ende, pasan a ser un producto del placer y del gusto del hombre.¹⁸⁹ Es innegable que se pueden trasladar esas mismas conclusiones al caso de la propaganda estadounidense. La propaganda era producida por un organismo controlado por hombres y en donde los creadores de esas imágenes eran hombres. Además no sólo era la mujer a la que se buscaba inspirar, agilizar y convencer con esas imágenes sino también a los hombres. Es decir, se daba un mensaje a los maridos, los prometidos, los padres, los hermanos por el que se justificaba no sólo la representación de la mujer usando pantalones y trabajando con maquinaria pesada, sino también el hecho de que ellas estaban ocupando trabajos tradicionalmente relacionados al hombre porque ellas los estaban sustituyendo a favor de la defensa de la nación.¹⁹⁰

2.2.1. Mujeres en las fábricas

Aunque de forma limitada, la mujer estadounidense llevaba más de dos siglos trabajando por lo que resulta absurdo pensar que de pronto, durante la primera mitad del siglo XX, se le hayan abierto súbitamente las puertas del ámbito laboral. Sin embargo, es importante indicar que lo que cambió y lo que resultó verdaderamente significativo fue la clase de trabajos que ellas van a ejercer en el nuevo entorno laboral que se dio gracias a los cambios sociales, políticos e ideológicos que trajo consigo la primera mitad del siglo.

Los trabajos que la mujer llevó a cabo desde antes de la constitución de los Estados Unidos, aunque limitados a ciertas esferas, fueron variados también. Estaban relacionados

¹⁸⁹ Whitney Chadwick. *op. cit.*, p. 280.

¹⁹⁰ *Ídem.*, p. 52.

con las labores en el campo y en el hogar, y vinculados cuando estaban solteras a sus padres, y una vez casadas, a sus maridos. El que la mujer trabajara en los negocios o en las granjas de sus familias o de sus maridos fue algo muy común y no era mal visto porque ellas se desenvolvían dentro de la protección de instituciones. Es decir, entornos que, como se mencionó anteriormente, eran considerados naturales para el desarrollo de la mujer. Gracias al compromiso matrimonial la mujer adquiría un mejor estatus dentro de la sociedad frente a las que permanecían solteras o buscaban mantenerse por sus propios medios. A la muerte de sus maridos, la mayor parte de las viudas podían heredar los negocios y las granjas para administrarlos como las patronas y las cabezas de familia. A finales del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX se ampliaron las posibilidades laborales para las mujeres, es decir, ya no sólo dependerían de sus padres o de sus maridos sino que podrían ganar sueldos por ellas mismas en trabajos en los que anteriormente resultaba impensable que ellas fueran contratadas. Sin embargo, los trabajos que ocuparon las mujeres –como secretarias, mecanógrafas, miembro de una línea de ensamblaje en fábricas pequeñas, empleadas en tiendas- continuaron siendo de bajo perfil y poco calificados, además de que lo que ganaban era considerablemente poco e injusto si se comparaba con los sueldos de los hombres.¹⁹¹ El siglo XX fue el momento en el que la mujer tuvo acceso a los trabajos *white-collar* y *pink-collar* que consistían básicamente en los trabajos de oficina o labor de ventas y de contacto con clientes, respectivamente. Pero también tuvieron acceso a los *blue-collar*,¹⁹² es decir, aquellos relacionados con la mano de obra pesada. Irónicamente, fue gracias a las dos guerras mundiales lo que marcó un antes y un después en la consolidación de la mujer estadounidense en esta clase de trabajos que antes estaban reservados exclusivamente para los hombres.

Como se ha visto, con la paulatina disminución de la mano de obra masculina, el esfuerzo de guerra durante la SGM requirió nuevamente del trabajo de ellas por segunda ocasión en menos de treinta años luego de la PGM. La demanda laboral fue incrementándose debido a los crecientes requerimientos de los cuerpos del ejército, que en algún momento dejaron de recurrir al alistamiento voluntario y optaron por la leva obligatoria, lo cual únicamente reflejaba la cantidad de bajas en los frentes y la preocupante duración de

¹⁹¹ Carl N. Degler. *op. cit.*, p. 415.

¹⁹² *Ídem.*, p. 414. La desigualdad en los sueldos entre hombres y mujeres resulta ser un tema que aún en nuestros días provoca preocupación y debate entre los círculos feministas que abogan por la igualdad en la remuneración económica de la mujer por realizar el mismo trabajo que un hombre.

la guerra. Desde luego que la necesidad de contar con mujeres en las fábricas también respondió a una cuestión de carácter económico. Y frente al conflicto fue una realidad el hecho de que las mujeres estadounidenses respondieran al llamado. Para marzo y abril de 1941, cuando ya se tenían contemplados los estimados necesarios para producir en las fábricas de tanques, de barcos y de aviones, los hombres todavía trabajaban en ellas. Como lo recuerda Juanita Loveless, una joven texana que entró a trabajar a los 18 años en Vegas Aircraft, una división de Lockheed, inmediatamente después de Pearl Harbor:

La primera cosa que noté fue que todos los instructores eran hombres. La mayoría de los trabajadores eran hombres. Vi muy pocas mujeres. Aún en la plataforma en la que trabajé, había seis u ocho muchachos jóvenes, de dieciocho o diecinueve años, y yo, y dos o tres mujeres de mediana edad.¹⁹³

Con el establecimiento en septiembre de 1942 de la *Womanpower Campaign*,¹⁹⁴ fue cuando las tareas de la mujer como trabajadoras de fábricas aumentaron y, por ende, comenzaron a aparecer en las revistas, en los carteles de propaganda y en el cine con mayor frecuencia, coincidiendo que para:

Principios de 1942 la industria empleó 19,000,000 de mujeres estadounidenses entre las edades de 20 y 60 años, y para el año siguiente, las mujeres conformaban un tercio de fuerza de trabajo en la producción de aeronaves-- casi medio millón de mujeres. Para julio de 1944, 36.9 por ciento de los trabajadores en las industrias que manejaban contratos principales eran mujeres [...] Para octubre de 1943 había 167,700 mujeres trabajando en los astilleros, con cifras comparables en otras industrias. En 1943, en Willow Run, la fábrica de producción de aeronaves más grande del mundo, 38 por ciento de la fuerza de trabajo eran mujeres.¹⁹⁵

El periodo que va de 1942 hasta principios de 1945 es un momento clave para comprender el fenómeno de la mujer en la mano de obra para apoyar el esfuerzo de guerra. La OIG se concentró, en dicho periodo, para alentar a los medios de comunicación con el fin de mostrar la figura de “la heroína del nuevo orden”. Entre otras consignas, se promovió particularmente la idea de que la figura tradicional de la ama de casa “había muerto” el día del bombardeo a Pearl Harbor: “One woman can shorten this war!” (¡Una mujer puede

¹⁹³ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 137. “The first thing I noticed was that all the men were instructors. Most of the workers were men. I saw very few women. Even the bench I worked on, there were six or eight young boys, eighteen or nineteen years old, and myself, and two or three middle-aged women.” T. A.

¹⁹⁴ Gerd Horten. *op. cit.*, p. 155.

¹⁹⁵ Alan L. Gropman. *op. cit.*, p. 127. “Early 1942, industry employed 19,000,000 American women between the ages of 20 and 60, and by the next year women made up a third of the aircraft production work force-- almost a half million women. By July 1944, 36.9 percent of the workers in industries handling prime contracts were women. (...) By October 1943 there were 167,700 women at work in the shipyards with comparable figures in other industries. In 1943, at Willow Run, the world's largest aircraft manufacturing factory, 38 percent of the work force were women.” T. A. *Vide* también David M. Kennedy y Susan Hartmann.

acortar esta guerra!).¹⁹⁶ Entre 1943 y 1944, la producción en las fábricas y los astilleros alcanzó su cima.¹⁹⁷ Finalmente, para finales de 1944 y hasta se firmó el armisticio, el trabajo en las fábricas disminuyó considerablemente, de la misma forma que las imágenes que mostraban a la mujer realizando esos trabajos.

A) Industrias bélicas

El trabajo en las fábricas de municiones o de maquinaria bélica resultaba ser un trabajo atractivo para las mujeres por varias razones. Una de ellas definitivamente fue la paga, la cual era mucho mejor que la de los trabajos en las oficinas o en los sectores de ventas.¹⁹⁸

De los veinticuatro testimonios de mujeres que participaron en la guerra recopilados por el *Veteran's History Project* y del libro *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* de Sherna Berger Gluck, doce fueron trabajadoras en las llamadas plantas de defensa (Ver Gráfica 6). Por ejemplo, Sarah Davies Craig, oriunda de Ohio, trabajó en una planta que fabricaba aviones bombarderos Boeing. En su testimonio recuerda que la paga ciertamente resultaba un factor a considerar al momento de decidirse a entrar a trabajar: su salario era de 32 dólares a la semana.¹⁹⁹ Helen Brown, nacida en Virginia Occidental, fue contratada por Goodyear Aircraft y trabajó en la producción de los aviones de combate Corsair; al final de la guerra el dinero que ella logró ahorrar lo destinó a la compra de muebles para la casa que compartiría con su marido: su salario era de 1.97 dólares la hora.²⁰⁰ Al preguntarle a Dorothy Jeannette Mobley, soldadora de aviones bombarderos B-27 y B-17, en la Casper Airbase, sobre qué era lo que le disgustaba de su trabajo, ella respondió tajantemente: "Me gustaba porque era probablemente mi primer cheque de pago y yo pensaba que era genial, recibir \$125 al mes [...] ¡Hombre, eso era un montón de dinero!"²⁰¹ Betty Jeanne Boggs, entró a trabajar más por iniciativa de su madre que por la suya propia en Doaks, una pequeña planta que fabricaba partes para la construcción de los aviones C-47 de la Douglas Aircraft. A sus diecisiete años, ciertamente la perspectiva de ganar dinero le resultó atractiva:

No pagaba alojamiento y comida, nada. Así que mi única responsabilidad era cuidar de mí misma. Compraría de todo: mis zapatos, ropa interior. Cuanto más trabajaba, más ropa compraba. Podía ir y derrochar toda mi paga en un día si quería. Recuerdo que me compré un

¹⁹⁶ Gerd Horten. *op. cit.*, p. 163.

¹⁹⁷ George H. Roeder. *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁹⁸ Susan Hartmann. *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

¹⁹⁹ Entrevista a Sarah J. Davies Craig. Transcripción no. 3. 9 p., p. 8.

²⁰⁰ Entrevista a Helen H. Brown. Transcripción no. 8. 9 p., p. 9.

²⁰¹ Entrevista a Dorothy Jeannette Mobley. Transcripción no. 15. 7 p., p. 3, 7. "I liked it because it was probably my first paycheck and I thought that was great, getting \$125 a month [...] Boy that was a lot of money!", T. A.

acordeón –hace apenas unos años que me deshice de él- y me compré un radiante abrigo rojo. Y después compré un vestido negro con escote bajo que tenía algo de encaje negro. Hombre, yo debo haber sido un éxito dentro de él. Mi madre me dejaba usarlo, así que creo que estaba bien. No ahorré nada. Mis padres me dejaban gastarlo en cualquier forma que yo quisiera. Cuando miro hacia atrás, creo que es un poco triste pero eso es en retrospectiva. Tal vez en ese momento me hubiera rebelado. Yo sólo sentía: “¡Oh, qué bien!, me estoy divirtiendo y eso está bien”.²⁰²

Por otro lado, y en muchos casos, se le permitió a la mujer mejorar su calidad de vida. Se le abrió la posibilidad de trasladarse de sus lugares de origen en busca de mejores oportunidades laborales a aquellos estados de la unión americana donde la concentración de las industrias de guerra era mayor (Ver Gráfica 2 y 7). Tal fueron los casos del sur de California o el norte de la costa este, donde la producción de aviones de combate y bombarderos, además de la de navíos de guerra era considerablemente vasta. Tan sólo en la costa oeste, y en la industria de la construcción aeronáutica, la mujer ocupó el 50 por ciento de la fuerza de trabajo de un total de dos millones, mientras que en la industria náutica ocupó el 11.3 por ciento.²⁰³ Tal es el caso de Fanny Christina Hill, una mujer afroamericana nacida en Texas que durante la guerra se mudó a Los Ángeles para trabajar en la compañía North American Aircraft. Fanny fue uno de los tantos ejemplos de una clase muy particular de mujer que consideró los años de la guerra como un punto de inflexión dentro de su vida porque le permitió no sólo conocer otros lugares, trabajar y crecer, sino también ahorrar el dinero necesario para comprar una vivienda propia. Esto fue posible gracias a los ahorros de una parte de su salario que inició con una paga de 60 centavos la hora en 1943, para terminar con 9.44 dólares la hora en los años ochenta.²⁰⁴ Fanny, incluso, comparte con bastante seguridad y sin nada de remordimiento la siguiente reflexión sobre lo que la guerra significó para ella:

Me hizo vivir mejor. En verdad lo hizo. Nosotros siempre decimos que Lincoln liberó a los Negros. Creo que hay una estatua allí en Washington, D.C., en la que le está quitando algo de encima al Negro. Bueno, mi hermana siempre dijo -y por eso no puedes entrevistarla a ella porque es muy radical- “Hitler fue quien nos sacó de las cocinas de la gente blanca.”²⁰⁵

²⁰² Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 113. “I didn’t pay room and board, nothing. So my only responsibility was just to take care of myself. I would buy everything: my shoes, lingerie. The more I worked the more clothes I bought. I could go out and blow my whole pay in one day if I wanted to. I remember I bought myself an accordion-- it’s only a few years ago that I finally got rid of that-- and I bought myself a bright red coat. And then I bought a black dress with a low neckline and it had some black lace. Boy, I must have been a smash in it. My mother let me wear it, so I guess it was all right. I didn’t save anything. My parents let me spend it in any way I wanted. When I look back, I think it’s kind of sad but that’s hindsight again. Maybe at the time I would have rebelled. I just felt: ‘Oh, goody, I’m having fun today and it’s fine’” T. A.

²⁰³ David M. Kennedy., *op., cit.*, p. 778.

²⁰⁴ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op., cit.*, p. 48

²⁰⁵ *Ídem.*, p. 42. “It made me live better. It really did. We always say that Lincoln took the bale off the Negroes. I

Una experiencia similar a la de Fanny, es la de Sybil Lewis, una joven afroamericana que como muchas trabajó como una empleada doméstica en su natal Oklahoma, donde ganaba 3.50 dólares a la semana. Con la guerra, Sybil se mudó a Los Ángeles y entró a trabajar en Lockheed Aircraft, donde trabajó como una remachadora al lado de una mujer blanca. Al terminar la guerra, entró a la universidad, luego trabajó en el sector civil y accedió a los privilegios de la clase media. Sybil recuerda que “Si no hubiera sido por la guerra, no creo que los negros estarían en la posición en la que están ahora (...) La guerra, cambió mi vida.”²⁰⁶

El trabajo en las fábricas les facilitó, como a Fanny y a Sybil, las posibilidades económicas para conseguir, a la larga, una vivienda propia o para continuar sus estudios en el caso de las jóvenes que no habían cursado una carrera universitaria o la habían dejado trunca al iniciar la guerra porque “casi un quinto de todas las nuevas participantes dentro de las industrias de guerra fueron mujeres jóvenes que habían sido estudiantes en la víspera del conflicto.”²⁰⁷ (Ver Gráfica 5 y 9) Estudiantes como Betty Cook, quien al igual que Fanny, dejó su natal Iowa para mudarse a California, donde después de trabajar en la planta de aeronaves de Lockheed, decidió inscribirse en la Universidad de Los Ángeles para seguir estudiando, ya que había dejado su carrera universitaria al iniciar la guerra. Betty lo recuerda así: “Bueno, tomé esos pocos ahorros y pensé: ‘¿lo pongo en un tren para volver a Iowa?, ¿a la Universidad? No, voy a ir a UCLA aquí en Los Ángeles’ y fue una suerte que lo hiciera.”²⁰⁸

B) La imagen de “Rosie the Riveter”

Ahora bien, además de los beneficios económicos y las perspectivas de nuevas oportunidades, las representaciones propagandísticas que se produjeron durante esos años de guerra también fueron uno de los elementos clave para comprender la iniciativa de las mujeres por entrar a la fuerza de trabajo. Mucho se ha escrito sobre una de estas imágenes, si no es que la más significativas de todas, la cual a grandes rasgos terminó por englobar la

think there is a statue up there in Washington, D.C., where he's lifting something off the Negro. Well, my sister always said-- that's why you can't interview her because she's so radical-- 'Hitler was the one that got us out of the white folk's kitchen.'" T. A.

²⁰⁶ David M. Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 769. “had it not been for the war, I don't think blacks would be in the position they are now (...) The war, changed my life.” T. A.

²⁰⁷ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 101. “almost one-fifth of all new entrants into the war industries were young women who had been students on the eve of the war.” T. A.

²⁰⁸ Entrevista a Betty Jane Esmoil Cook. Transcripción no. 1. 15 p., p. 6. “Well, I took that bit of savings and thought: “do I put it in train fair to go back to Iowa?, to College?, no, I'll just go to UCLA right there in Los Angeles” and it was fortunate that I did.” T. A.

idea de lo que se pretendía que fuera el papel de la mujer y el de su participación dentro del esfuerzo de guerra estadounidense. Esa representación es la de “Rosie the Riveter”, la cual, durante la guerra, se convirtió en la imagen ideal del papel que las mujeres jugaron en el *home front*. Ya después de la guerra, se reutilizó como una imagen de la mujer desarrollándose no dentro en un contexto bélico sino en el de la vida cotidiana. En nuestros días, *Rosie* se ha convertido en un verdadero ícono del empoderamiento femenino que se ha extendido más allá de las fronteras, las diferencias étnicas o sociales. El derrotero de apropiación sociocultural de *Rosie* fue sorprendente porque no nació ni fue concebida como un símbolo del feminismo. El artista no pretendía que lo fuera, la OIG tampoco, pero esa cualidad fue algo que se le adjudicó con el tiempo dejando claro, nuevamente, el poder de las imágenes dentro de las sociedades. La imagen de *Rosie*, en particular, adquirió con los años un valor y un significado por sí misma, distintos al valor y al significado que se le pretendieron dar cuando fue concebida, alcanzando así un estatus de imagen “viva” que trasciende y permanece.

Pero entonces, ¿de dónde surgió la idea o el concepto de *Rosie*?, ¿quién era *Rosie*?, ¿a quién representaba? Ella era realmente una mujer “joven y anciana; afroamericana, anglosajona y latina; soltera y casada; trabajadora, estudiante, y ama de casa de tiempo completo.”²⁰⁹ Pero, ¿por qué *Rosie*?, ¿por qué razón darle un nombre, una identidad tan definida y particular? El mote de “Rosie the Riveter”, surgió gracias a una canción de 1942 escrita por Redd Evans y popularizada por varios cantantes y bandas durante la guerra. La canción materializaba el ideal de la mujer trabajadora en el *home front*: una representación romántica de los deberes y las tareas que se le pidieron a la mujer. La letra de la canción describía a *Rosie* como una una chica que trabajaba arduamente en una línea de ensamblaje de aviones P-19. Su novio, de nombre Charlie, se enlista con los *marines*, por lo cual ella se dedica a protegerlo a través de su empleo. Ella lo llevará a cabo con orgullo y determinación porque además de ser su deber patriótico, es su aportación para la causa de la victoria, y su forma de cobijar a su hombre en el frente de batalla. Por eso *Rosie* no sólo trabajará, sino que también comprará bonos de guerra para apoyar a la defensa y no pierde el tiempo en fiestas o bares porque su quehacer dará de qué hablar en Berlín y será vitoreado en Moscú.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. XII. “She was young and old; Afro-american, Anglo and Latina; single and married; worker, student, and full-time housewife.” T. A.

²¹⁰ Redd Evans, *Rosie the Riveter*, letra, 1942. All the day long, whether rain or shine / She's a part of the

A partir de esta canción, el nombre y la figura de *Rosie* se fueron introduciendo en el imaginario estadounidense gracias a las siguientes y muy variadas representaciones que surgieron de ella. La figura de *Rosie* se incorporó al grupo de imágenes que sirvieron para encarnar la realidad o los ideales de la sociedad estadounidense. Ejemplos de estos íconos son el “Tío Sam”, que representa a la nación entera como ya se ha mencionado; o “Jim Crow”, una representación de las leyes de segregación racial durante el siglo XIX y cuya imagen mostraba a un chico afroamericano que, mal vestido, daba pasos de forma saltarina. “Rosie the Riveter” es otro ícono que nació como:

Una nena de guerra con un futuro incierto [...] un símbolo ficticio para una compleja realidad social que eludía una descripción pulcra. La figura de Rosie, vestida de mezclilla, que empuña una herramienta de soldadura y con actitud voluntariosa estaba destinada a personificar a las cerca de diecinueve millones de mujeres que trabajaron por salarios en algún momento u otro durante la guerra.²¹¹

Una de las representaciones más famosas de *Rosie* es el cartel de propaganda del artista J. Howard Miller (Fig. 20), el cual se caracteriza por su simpleza pero también por su mensaje conciso y directo: una mujer de mirada determinante, desafiante incluso, que asegura que el trabajo “puede hacerse” mientras dobla las mangas de su camisa de mezclilla y muestra su fuerte brazo.

assembly line / She's making history, working for victory / Rosie, brr, the riveter. Keeps a sharp lookout for sabotage / Sitting up there on the fuselage / That little frail can do more than a male can do / Rosie, brr, the riveter. Rosie's got a boyfriend, Charlie / Charlie, he's a Marine / Rosie is protecting Charlie / Workin' overtime on the riveting machine. When they gave her a production 'E' / She was as proud as a girl could be / There's something true about, red, white, and blue about / Rosie, brr, the riveter. Do-do-do-do / Ev'ryone stops to admire the scene Rosie at work on the P-19 / She's never twittery, nervous or jittery / (female voice: I'm Rosie, hm-hm-hm-hm, the riveter). What if she's smeared full of oil and grease / Doin' her bit for the old lend-lease / She keeps the gang around, they love to hang around / Rosie (Hm-hm-hm-hm, that's me, the riveter). Rosie buys a lot of War Bonds / That girl really has sense/Wishes she could purchase more Bonds / Putting all her extra cash in National Defense. Oh, when they gave her a production 'E' / She was as proud as a girl could be / There's something true about, red, white, and blue about / Rosie the riveter gal. While other girls attend their favorite cocktail bar / Sipping dry Martinis, munching caviar / There's a girl who's really putting them to shame / Rosie is her name. Oh, Rosie buys a lot of War Bonds / That girl really has sense / Wishes she could purchase more Bonds / Putting all her extra cash into National Defense. Oh, Senator Jones, who was in the know / Shouted these words on the radio / Berlin will hear about, Moscow will cheer about / Rosie (Hah-hah-hah-hee-hee-hee), Rosie (Hee-hee-hee-hee) / Rosie the riveter gal. Vide: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CQ0M0wx00s>

²¹¹ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 776. “A war baby with an uncertain future (...) a fictional symbol for a complex social reality that eluded tidy description. Rosie's denim-clad, tool-wielding, can-do figure was meant to personify the nearly nineteen million women who worked for wages at one time or another during the war.” T. A.

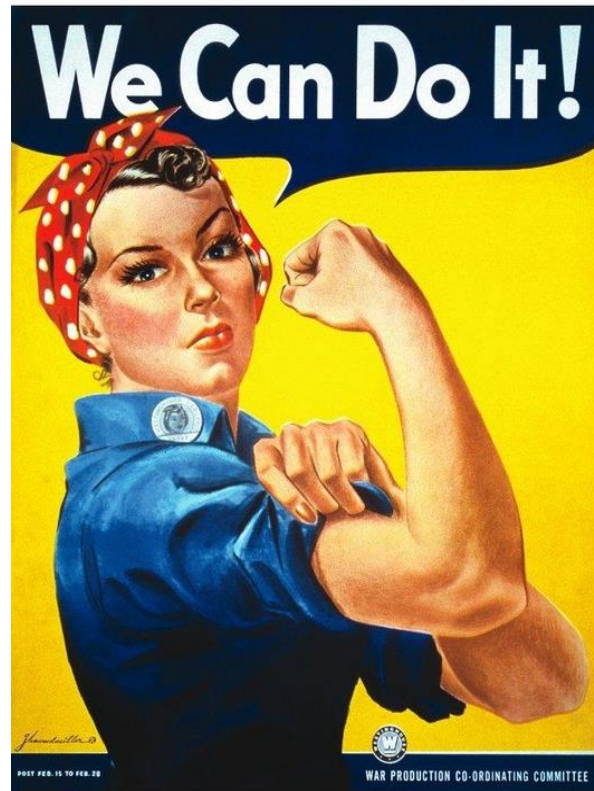


Fig. 20. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, J. Howard Miller. *We Can Do It!*, 1942.

Otra de las representaciones más famosas de *Rosie* es el diseño que el conocido ilustrador Norman Rockwell hizo para la portada del *Saturday Evening Post* del 29 de mayo de 1943, en conmemoración del Memorial Day (Fig. 21). Hay que recordar que Rockwell trabajó en más de 300 portadas para el *Post* dentro de las cuales se pueden incluir las que la PGM le inspiró. Para la portada del número de mayo de 1943, Rockwell crea una imagen plena de detalles y alegorías. Se trata de una joven pelirroja, de mejillas rosadas pero sin maquillaje y de complexión ancha, que sostiene una máquina remachadora y una lonchera con su nombre sobre su regazo. Mientras tanto, su mano izquierda sujeta un sándwich preparado con prisa porque hay mucho trabajo que hacer en el *home front* y, en cambio, no hay tiempo que perder en la cocina y en la mesa. Al fondo, la bandera de las barras y las estrellas ondea grandiosa y orgullosamente detrás de ella. En cambio, su pie derecho se apoya sobre una copia del ensayo de Adolf Hitler “Mi Lucha”, tal vez con la intención de mandar un claro mensaje de que la victoria sobre las que ese libro representaba debían ser pisoteados en nombre de la democracia y la libertad. Ella viste una blusa azul y un overol de

mezclilla en cuyo pectoral porta ocho botones con diferentes motivos de propaganda y ayuda. Por ejemplo, se identifica uno como donante de sangre para la Cruz Roja. Otro botón muestra la Estrella Azul por ser colaboradora del servicio de la marina y también lleva uno con la “V” sobre fondo blanco como donante de bonos de guerra –muchas veces la “V” era acompañada por la transcripción en código Morse de la palabra “victoria”-. Asimismo aparece una insignia presidencial con la letra “E” por su excelente desempeño, así como un par de medallas por su fidelidad que recuerdan los botones militares elaborados por la tradicional *Waterbury Button Company*. *Rosie* lleva sobre su corazón un disco con el diseño de su identificación personal. Finalmente, el botón que permanece oculto por una parte del tirante del overol quizás llevaba la leyenda del popular “Remember Pearl Harbor”.²¹² Podemos decir que la ilustración de Rockwell sintetiza la combinación del arte y la publicidad con un mensaje propagandístico muy claro: un llamado al esfuerzo de guerra dirigido a las mujeres lectoras del *Post*. Un público femenino que, sin embargo, aparecía citado de forma completamente diferente en otra portada realizada por el mismo Rockwell antes de Pearl Harbor. En la portada de marzo de 1941 aparecía una joven estudiante sentada con sus libros en el regazo pero cubriendo su rostro con el de una artista –muy al estilo de Ellen B. T. Pyle- que aparecía precisamente en un número abierto del *Post* en una especie de “autorreferencia” en *abyme* (Fig. 22). En Estados Unidos la transformación de la historia de ellas a través de la mirada de ellos queda más que palpable en estos dos números.

²¹² David Hackett Fischer. *Liberty and Freedom. A Visual History of American Founding Ideas.*, p. 537.



Fig. 21. Norman Rockwell. *Rosie the Riveter*, 1943.



Fig. 22. Norman Rockwell. *Cover Girl*, 1941.

El historiador del arte, Ernest Gombrich, aporta la idea de que en el arte del retrato por lo general percibimos la máscara antes que el rostro original.²¹³ El artista, al basarse en modelos al natural, personas como uno, plasma en el lienzo lo que vendría siendo la máscara de ese rostro, como por ejemplo, “La Mona Lisa” de Leonardo o “La Maja Desnuda” de Goya, entre muchos otros ejemplos. En el caso de *Rosie*, esta idea podría aplicar en el hecho de que las dos representaciones de *Rosie* más famosas, la de Miller y la de Rockwell surgieron de modelos al natural. En el caso de la imagen de Miller, han sido muchas mujeres las que se han identificado como las “verdaderas *Rosies*” pero el artista se basó en la fotografía de una joven trabajadora de una fábrica de Michigan llamada Geraldine Hoff Doyle. Por su parte en el caso de Norman Rockwell no hay discusión sobre el hecho de que el artista se inspiró en dos modelos. Para la pose de su modelo, utilizó el Isaías de Miguel Ángel reapropiada por el artista norteamericano para crear una imagen novedosa: una profetisa laica de la libertad y la

²¹³ Ernest Gombrich. *Los usos de las imágenes: estudios sobre la función del arte y la comunicación visual.*, p. 29-30.

democracia.²¹⁴ Y para el rostro, en una sus jóvenes vecinas de Vermont, llamada Mary Doyle Keefe, quien a los diecinueve años²¹⁵ posó para una sesión fotográfica que después derivó en la famosa ilustración. Ella recuerda cómo el famoso ilustrador se acercó a ella y le ofreció posar para él, con una remuneración de cinco dólares por cada vez que se presentó en el estudio para modelar, un ofrecimiento que ella aceptó con el entusiasmo característico de una joven de diecisiete años, ignorando en todo momento lo que Norman Rockwell planeaba pintar y cuál sería el resultado final. En su testimonio, al ser cuestionada si sabía de antemano la intención del artista de crear la imagen de *Rosie*, Mary rememora:

Probablemente él dijo algo porque tenía todas esas poses para ponerme, los overoles y la camisa y las, todas las cosas que iban con él y las... él cortaría lo que quería, el brazo grande, las piernas grandes, y los pondría así y entonces él dibujaría eso, así que no tenías que sentarte mientras él, mientras él estaba pintando y así fue cómo él hizo la gran, la grandeza de la mujer [...] cuando, cuando salió en el Saturday Post él me llamó para decirme que se disculpaba por hacerme una mujer tan grande.²¹⁶

Ciertamente la gente llegó a identificar más a las máscaras de este par de jovencitas y sus rostros quedaron en el anonimato, ocultos detrás de sus famosas ilustraciones. Solamente hasta años recientes fue cuando surgió un interés particular por parte de estudiosos y curiosos por descubrir los rostros que originaron estas imágenes que se introdujeron poco a poco en el imaginario de toda una sociedad.

Las demás representaciones propagandísticas de *Rosie* siguieron la misma línea iconográfica: mujeres que se buscaba mostrar fuertes pero sin perder un toque femenino; determinadas y comprometidas con la causa, con el cabello bien sujetado por un pañuelo y vistiendo sus uniformes de trabajo que consistían en overoles o pantalones anchos, siempre flanqueadas por mensajes en favor de la causa. Es decir, mensajes que pretendían convencerla y exhortarla a unirse al esfuerzo de guerra en el llamado frente doméstico, y que en todo momento le recordaban que su trabajo era uno que llevaría a cabo en nombre de su hombre, fuera este su padre, su hermano o su marido (Fig. 23) y que su aportación lograría

²¹⁴ Robert Rosenblum. "Reintroducing Norman Rockwell." En: Hart Hennessey, Maureen and Anne Knutson. *Norman Rockwell. Pictures for the American People.*, p. 185.

²¹⁵ Mary Doyle Keefe nunca trabajó como una *Rosie* en una fábrica de ensamblaje sino que su ocupación en favor de la causa bélica fue donar sangre y trabajar en una compañía telefónica donde también trabajó su madre. *Vide*: Entrevista a Mary Doyle Keefe. Transcripción no. 2 y David Hackett Fischer.

²¹⁶ Entrevista a Mary Doyle Keefe. Transcripción no. 2. 14 p., p. 4-3. "He probably said something because he had all the poses to put on, the dungarees and the shirt and the, all the-the things that went with it and the... he would cut out what he wanted, the big arm, the big legs, and put them on as this so and then he would draw from that, so you didn't have to sit while he, while he was painting and that's how he got the big, the bigness of the, of the woman [...] when, when it came out in Saturday Post he called me to tell me that he apologize for making me such a large woman." T. A.

obtener la victoria de una forma más acelerada (Fig. 24): “Do the job HE left behind” (Haz el trabajo que ÉL dejó atrás); “I’ve found the job where I fit best!” (¡He encontrado el trabajo donde me adapto mejor!); “I’m proud... my husband wants me to do my part” (Estoy orgullosa... mi esposo quiere que haga mi parte); “The girl he left behind is still behind him” (La chica que él dejó atrás aún está detrás de él); “Soldiers without guns” (Soldados sin armas); “Together we’ll win! Our hearts are in our jobs!” (¡Unidos ganaremos. Nuestros corazones están en nuestros trabajos!) o “This is my fight too!” (¡Ésta también es mi lucha!)

El tema de la representación de la feminidad se volvió muy importante cuando el hecho de mantener las líneas que dividían las características “naturales” de un género y de otro se convirtió nuevamente en una de las preocupaciones más grandes no sólo para las mujeres sino del resto de la sociedad. Por ello, era importante pintar y fotografiar a las mujeres trabajadoras de una forma que hiciera énfasis en el bien aplicado maquillaje o en el cabello bien peinado. El propósito era darle a sus labores en las fábricas un tono que fuera al mismo tiempo patriótico y glamoroso, con elementos que resultaran atractivos para esas



Fig. 23. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Adolph Treidler. *She's a WOW!*, 1942.



Fig. 24. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Alfred Palmer, fotógrafo. *The more women at work, the sooner we win!*, 1943.

mujeres que el gobierno buscaba fueran preferentemente jóvenes e incluso recién graduadas.²¹⁷ Esto reflejaba el temor de que las mujeres que trabajaban en las fábricas se convirtieran de un momento a otro en mujeres masculinizadas, que terminarían por olvidar su papel como mujer dentro de la sociedad, tornándose musculosas y rudas, sucias y poco atractivas.

En medios impresos como la revista *Life*, la representación positiva de la mujer dentro del ambiente de las fábricas y los astilleros fue una constante que se dio desde principios de 1942 hasta los últimos meses de la guerra en 1945. Artículos y foto reportajes pretendían mostrarle a la sociedad que la mujer dentro de la fábrica era una realidad del contexto bélico a la que había que adaptarse y acostumbrarse mientras durara la guerra. Esta clase de artículos pretendía que la opinión pública cambiara la forma de concebir a la mujer trabajadora, dejando atrás el escepticismo y la renuencia de los primeros años de guerra. Por eso mismo, y en vías de lograr la aceptación y admiración de estas mujeres, se hizo énfasis en que ellas estaban llenando los vacíos que dejaban los hombres para mantener la productividad, además de contribuir a la causa de la victoria. Algunos de estos artículos transmitían estas ideas desde los títulos: “Pearl Harbor widows, enlisted by the government, report for work at a west coast aircraft Factory” [febrero 1942];²¹⁸ “Girls in uniform. In US industry they help make weapons of war” [julio 1942];²¹⁹ “Smith girls. Job market opens wide for college graduates as war reduces manpower” [septiembre, 1942];²²⁰ “Women begin to take over some of men's dirty Jobs” [diciembre 1942];²²¹ “Women now make tests once done by soldiers” [febrero 1943];²²² “Worker suggestions. A Packard woman worker wins golden wings for finding ways to make engine parts faster” [mayo 1943];²²³ “Women in steel. They are handling tough jobs in heavy industry” [agosto 1943]²²⁴ o “Women at war. Edna Reindel paints them at work in US shipyard and plane plant” [junio 1944].²²⁵

²¹⁷ Sherma Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 11.

²¹⁸ Viudas de Pearl Harbor, enlistadas por el gobierno, se reportan para trabajar en la industria aeronáutica de la costa oeste. T. A.

²¹⁹ Chicas en uniforme. En la industria estadounidense ellas ayudan a hacer armas de guerra. T. A.

²²⁰ Chicas herreras. El mercado de guerra se abre ampliamente para graduadas de la universidad mientras la guerra reduce la mano de obra masculina. T. A.

²²¹ Mujeres empiezan a tomar posesión de algunos de los trabajos sucios de los hombres. T. A.

²²² La mujer ahora hace las pruebas que alguna vez hicieron los soldados. T. A.

²²³ Sugerencias de las trabajadoras. Una mujer trabajadora de Packard gana las alas doradas por encontrar formas de hacer partes de máquinas más rápido. T. A.

²²⁴ Mujeres en acero. Ellas están manejando trabajos duros en la industria pesada. T. A.

²²⁵ Mujeres en guerra. Edna Reindel las pinta trabajando en un astillero y en una planta de aviones estadounidenses. T. A.

También es importante preguntarnos cuál fue el papel que jugaron las películas y la radio, además de la propaganda en carteles o demás medios impresos, a la hora de hacer circular, mantener y promover estas ideas en un país como Estados Unidos donde, y a pesar de la guerra, la producción de películas se mantuvo casi intacta. Los niveles de asistencia semanal a los cines eran de casi 100 millones de personas de las cuales las mujeres formaban dos tercios de dicha cantidad.²²⁶ Es una realidad que la industria fílmica mostró poco interés en realizar películas que presentaran a la mujer trabajando en las fábricas.²²⁷ Fueron pocas las películas cuya trama incluyera *Rosies* como el elemento central del discurso, y las que lo hicieron fueron películas de tipo B, como el caso de *Rosie the Riveter* (1944) o que no tuvieron mucho éxito comercial como *Tender Comrade* (1943), a pesar de contar con estrellas de la época como Jane Frazee o Ginger Rogers. Las tramas de ambos filmes ilustran la forma en la que Hollywood lidió con el tema de la mujer en las fábricas: con un enfoque puramente meloso y superficial. Un enfoque que, según Elaine Tyler May, no benefició para nada a la campaña de la *Womanpower*.²²⁸ En el caso de *Rosie...*, por ejemplo, la película cuenta la historia de una joven llamada Rosie –como para reforzar la idea, la imagen de las campañas propagandísticas–, quien además de trabajar en una planta de defensa en California, batalla con los problemas típicos que enfrentaba la mujer en el *home front*... según Hollywood: desde la búsqueda de un lugar donde vivir hasta la realidad de enamorarse de otro hombre mientras su prometido se encontraba en el frente. Por otro lado, en *Tender...*, la trama no es muy diferente ya que es la historia de cuatro mujeres casadas que trabajan en una fábrica de defensa y que deciden compartir una casa con el fin de economizar gastos; a lo largo de la película, se pueden conocer los antecedentes y opiniones en torno a la guerra de cada una, e incluso, el de una nueva compañera de origen alemán que pretende derrumbar la imagen del alemán malvado y en su lugar, representar la del alemán como una víctima más del nazismo.

Hollywood y la OIG trabajaron conjuntamente permitiendo que actrices como Lucille Ball (Fig. 25) Veronica Lake y la aún desconocida y joven Marilyn Monroe, fueran convocadas para posar en sesiones fotográficas que las mostraban haciendo trabajos de fábrica como si se trataran de *Rosies*, con la clara intención de alcanzar la atención de la sociedad, específicamente, del porcentaje femenino que conformaba el *home front*. Y el

²²⁶ Susan Hartmann. *op. cit.*, p. 191.

²²⁷ Gerd Horten. *op. cit.*, p. 164.

²²⁸ *Ídem.*, p. 166.

mensaje era todo menos subliminal: si las actrices, siempre llenas de glamour y gracia, podían hacer esa clase de trabajos, ¿qué podría hacer la mujer común y hasta dónde podría llegar con nada más que su determinación y su compromiso? Sin embargo, fue una realidad que la imagen de las mujeres a quienes se llegaron a identificar como *Rosies*, de todos modos fue muy criticada por la sociedad y por los medios de comunicación como se verá en el siguiente capítulo.



Fig. 25. Lucille Ball en la portada de *Silver Screen Magazine*, Sept. 1943.

2.2.2. Mujeres en el ejército

Además de la posibilidad de ingresar a la fuerza de trabajo pesado en las fábricas y los astilleros, la SGM marcó por primera vez la posibilidad para las mujeres de ser reclutadas en el ejército. Es decir, esta vez las mujeres ya no actuarían tan sólo como voluntarias en los cuerpos de enfermería en cada rama del ejército, armada y marina: dichas divisiones, durante el desarrollo de la SGM, reclutarían a 60,000 y 14,000 mujeres, respectivamente.²²⁹ Este conflicto bélico en particular, favoreció el alistamiento de las mujeres como verdaderas

²²⁹ Susan Hartmann. *op. cit.*, p. 32

militares que por primera vez tenían la posibilidad de hacer una carrera a lo largo de su vida dentro de los cuerpos de la armada, de la marina, de los *marines* o de la fuerza aérea. Tenían la oportunidad de obtener rangos y, si bien no vieron acción en el frente como en el caso masculino -o el caso de las mujeres soviéticas-, sí al menos podían ganar experiencia en lo que a la vida militar en los cuarteles se refería. En los Estados Unidos, las mujeres en el ejército se distribuyeron de la siguiente forma: “Entre 140 y 150,000 sirvieron en la *Women’s Army Corps (WAC)*; 100,000 con las *WAVES* de la marina; 23,000 con la *Marine Corps Women’s Reserve (MCWR)*; entre 10 y 13,000 con las *SPARS* de la Guardia Costera.”²³⁰ Además de que “Una de cada mil aviadoras sirvió con la *Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)*; su estatus era de civiles, pero su servicio fue paralelo a la de los cuerpos militares de mujeres.”²³¹ El número de mujeres que sirvieron en esta reserva fue de 1,074.

El objetivo al crear reservas y cuerpos especiales en los que las mujeres pudieran enlistarse era que ellas ocuparan los trabajos que permitirían la disponibilidad de más hombres aptos para el combate. Muchos de los lemas que aparecían en los carteles de reclutamiento y propaganda eran: “Free a man. Be a marine” (Libera a un hombre. Sé un marine); “To make men free” (Para hacer libres a los hombres) o “Work to set’em free” (Trabaja para liberarlos). Precisamente, las mujeres militares en Estados Unidos “liberaban” a los hombres de llevar a cabo un trabajo dentro del ejército desempeñado desde casa para que ellos pudieran viajar y combatir en los lejanos frentes de batalla. La cantidad de mujeres reclutadas que se registró al final de la guerra, resultó directamente proporcional a la cantidad de hombres que liberaron para servicio activo en los diferentes frentes, desde el del Pacífico hasta el europeo.

La posibilidad de pertenecer al ejército, más que resultarle atractivo a la mujer estadounidense en términos económicos, lo fue en el sentido de que también le ofreció nuevas oportunidades de vida. Le permitió a una gran parte de mujeres jóvenes y sedientas de curiosidad el poder abandonar los pueblos o las ciudades donde nacieron y se criaron para salir en busca de aventuras, como cuenta Charlotte Coleman, quien se enlistó en la

²³⁰ *Ídem.*, p. 32. “between 140 and 150, 000 served with the *Women’s Army Corps (WAC)*; 100,000 with the navy’s *WAVES*; 23,000 with the *Marine Corps Women’s Reserve (MCWR)*; and between 10 and 13,000 with the coast guard’s *SPARS*.” T. A.. *Vide* también: Judith A. Bellafaire. *The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Celebration*. <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/WAC/WAC.HTM> [Consulta 21/10/14] y <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/ww2-by-the-numbers/us-military.html> [Consulta 11/11/2014]

²³¹ *Ídem.*, p. 32. “One in thousand aviators served with the *Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)*; their status was civilian, but their service paralleled that of the women’s military corps.” T. A.

Reserva de la Guardia Costera (*SPARS*):

Bueno, yo, ah, yo, ya sabes, era un pequeño y agradable pueblo donde yo crecí; estaba justo en la playa pero no había nada que hacer, había, trabajé como una contadora para una estación de gasolina por un tiempo y [luego] trabajé fabricando torpedos [...] en Newport, Rhode Island, pero no había ningún lugar para las mujeres y yo no, no fui a la Universidad por eso cuando la SGM llegó pensé 'Oh, ¡bien!, puedo escaparme de Somerset'.²³²

También el sólo hecho de servir en el ejército resultaba una perspectiva atractiva: poder vestir el uniforme de las fuerzas armadas representaba para estas mujeres una especie de honor y compromiso que iba más allá del plano individual y se convirtió en una razón de peso para dar lo mejor de sí.

a) *Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC)/Women's Army Corps (WAC)*

La historia de este cuerpo femenino del ejército resulta interesante porque materializa los conflictos de género en una institución como el ejército de una larga tradición masculina. Como todos los casos en los que la mujer se vio involucrada en las actividades relacionadas directamente con la guerra en Estados Unidos, existió tanto una marcada hostilidad hacia la creación de una rama del ejército exclusivamente femenina, así como una acentuada resistencia a la aceptación e integración de todas aquellas mujeres no blancas que conformaban la sociedad estadounidense, es decir, que los casos de segregación racial continuaron muy presentes a lo largo de la guerra. Sin embargo, fue indudable el entusiasmo que despertó entre ellas el poder pertenecer a la *WAAC/WAC*.

La *WAAC/WAC* fue establecida en mayo de 1942 a través de la orden ejecutiva no. 9163 del presidente Franklin D. Roosevelt, luego de la revisión del proyecto para la creación de un cuerpo no combatiente femenino del ejército presentado por la congresista de Massachusetts, Edith Nourse Rogers en mayo de 1941. En julio de 1943, el mote *Auxiliary* fue eliminado una vez que se ordenó la plena incorporación de la *WAAC/WAC* al ejército. Se nombró como su directora a Oveta Culp Hobby, esposa del ex-gobernador de Texas, cuyo primer centro de entrenamiento se estableció en Fort Des Moines, Iowa. La *WAAC/WAC* aceptaba mujeres entre los veintiún y cuarenta y cinco años de edad, que midieran un promedio de entre 1.50 y 1.80 de altura, y con un peso no menor de 46 kilogramos; además

²³² Entrevista a Charlotte N. Russell Coleman. Transcripción no. 12. 15 p., p. 2. "Well, I ah, I, you know, it was a nice little town I grew up in, it was right on the beach but there was nothing to do, there was, I worked as a bookkeeper for a gas station for a little while and I worked at making torpedoes down at Newport, Rhode Island, but there wasn't any place for women and I didn't, I didn't go to college so when World War II came I thought "Oh, good! I can get away from Somerset." T. A.

de que debían someterse a una estricta serie de exámenes físicos y mentales.²³³ Las actividades y tareas que tenían las mujeres de la *WAAC/WAC* iban desde cocineras hasta mecanógrafas, electricistas, telegrafistas, contadoras, conductoras, mecánicas, radioperadoras y demás trabajos de soporte y mantenimiento para las *Army Ground Forces*, las *Army Service Forces* y las *Army Air Forces*. La *WAAC/WAC* finalmente fue disuelta en 1978 luego de servir en las guerras de Corea y de Vietnam para dar paso a la integración plena de las mujeres al ejército de la misma forma que los hombres, sin distinciones ni cuerpos o reservas especiales.²³⁴

b) *Navy Women's Reserve (WAVES)*

Esta reserva fue establecida por orden ejecutiva un par de meses después de la *WAAC/WAC* a finales de julio de 1942. Las mujeres reclutadas debían cumplir con los requisitos de tener entre veinte y cincuenta años de edad. Después, debían someterse también a rigurosos exámenes físicos para luego familiarizarse y aprender todo sobre las leyes y tradiciones navales. También tenían un acercamiento a la organización náutica tanto en la costa como en altamar, lo mismo que en el manejo de barcos y aeronaves, a la mecánica aérea, a la meteorología, al aparejo de paracaídas.²³⁵ Sin embargo, el desempeño de sus tareas se limitaba únicamente al cumplimiento de su deber dentro del territorio y las aguas de los Estados Unidos. Esto quería decir que tampoco serían embarcadas a los frentes en el extranjero ni cumplirían sus cargos a bordo de buques o aeronaves de la Marina.²³⁶ Al respecto, Mary Dannaher, una joven oriunda de Boston, Massachusetts y que se enlistó en esta reserva a la edad de veintiún años, recuerda: “Nosotras tomábamos historia naval - nunca se nos dio ninguna clase de entrenamiento con armas ni nada de eso, porque a las *WAVES* nunca se les permitió servir en altamar, de hecho. Y así es como nos gustaba.”²³⁷

²³³ “WAAC. US women troop to enlist in the Army's first all-female force.” En: *Life*. Vol. 12. Junio 8, 1942., p. 26. *Vide*:

http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=P1AEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA26&hl=es&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false [Consulta 12/08/14]

²³⁴ *Vide*: <http://www.nww2m.com/2012/05/waac-created/> [Consulta 12/08/14]

²³⁵ “WAACs & WAVES”. En: *Life*. Vol. 14. Marzo 15, 1943., p. 75. *Vide*: http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=YIEEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA72&hl=es&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false [Consulta 15/08/14].

²³⁶ *Vide*: <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq48-3e.htm> [Consulta 14/08/14]

²³⁷ Entrevista a Mary Barbara Brennan Dannaher. Transcripción no. 18. 22 p., p. 7. “We were taking Naval history (...) we were never given any kind of training with guns or anything like that, because the *WAVES* were never allowed to go overseas, as a matter of fact. And that's the way we liked it.” T. A.

c) *Women's Reserve of the US Coast Guard (SPARS)*

Esta reserva fue creada el 23 de noviembre de 1942, tomando su nombre de la conjunción del lema de la Guardia Costera: *Semper Paratus* (Siempre Listos). Las mujeres que optaban por reclutarse debían cumplir con requisitos muy específicos: el promedio de edad era de veintidós años y, al contrario de las *WAVES*, se prefería que las mujeres que aplicaban para pertenecer a este cuerpo tuvieran al menos un diploma de bachillerato y algunos años de experiencia en algún trabajo, además de que fueran buenas nadadoras o tuvieran conocimientos náuticos previos.

Las *SPARS* recibían su entrenamiento en las instalaciones de la Guardia Costera ubicadas en New London, Connecticut, donde se les preparaba para actividades y tareas que también estaban relacionadas no sólo con trabajos de oficina. Así, estas mujeres tenían que saber usar el aparejo de paracaídas, conducir vehículos, manejarse como radioperadoras específicamente con la nueva tecnología LORAN, la cual calculaba la ubicación específica de aeronaves y barcos enemigos, y cocinar. El cumplimiento del deber lo realizaban, al igual que las *WAVES*, desde territorio estadounidense, ya que de la misma forma que sus contrapartes de la marina, tampoco podían servir en altamar o fuera del continente americano hasta 1944, cuando algunas divisiones fueron enviadas a Hawái y a Alaska.²³⁸

d) *US Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR)*

La reserva exclusiva de los *marines* para las mujeres fue establecida el 13 de febrero de 1943 y en su momento fue comandada por el general Thomas Holcomb. Se distinguió de las demás agrupaciones por el prestigio, el orgullo y el carácter de elite que siempre ha acompañado a los *marines* de Estados Unidos. El general Holcomb respondió a la pregunta de por qué no se otorgaba a las mujeres *marines* un apodo o un mote coloquial parecido a los que se le dieron a las *WAVES* o a las *SPARS* de la siguiente manera: "Ellas son *Marines*. Ellas no tienen un apodo porque no lo necesitan. Ellas tienen su entrenamiento básico en una atmósfera Marine en un puesto de Marine. Ellas heredan las tradiciones de los Marines. Ellas *son* Marines."²³⁹ Sin embargo, en las actividades para las que se las entrenó, las

²³⁸ Vide: <http://www.nww2m.com/tag/women/page/2/> [Consulta 20/08/14]

²³⁹ "Women marines". En: *Life*. Vol. 16. Marzo 27, 1944., p. 82. "They are *Marines*. They don't have a nickname and they don't need one. They get their basic training in a Marine atmosphere at a Marine post. They inherit the traditions of the Marines. They are *Marines*." T. A. Vide: http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=z0wEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA81&hl=es&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false [Consulta 26/08/14]

mujeres *marines* también llevaron a cabo las mismas actividades que las de sus contrapartes de la marina o del ejército. La *MCWR* entrenaba a sus reclutas en trabajos que rebasaban las “200 diferentes especialidades incluyendo radioperadoras, mecánica de paracaídas, conductora, instructora de fuego aéreo, operadora de torre de control y mecánica de autos.”²⁴⁰ La cantidad aproximada de mujeres que sirvieron en esta reserva fue de más de 23,000²⁴¹ hasta que fue finalmente disuelta en septiembre de 1946. Para 1948, con la aprobación de la *Women’s Armed Service Integration Act*, las mujeres fueron bienvenidas e integradas completamente a los *marines* sin que hubiera una separación entre hombres y mujeres, o se tuviera la distinción de “reserva”.

e) *Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)*

Eleanor Roosevelt dijo en 1942: “Este no es un momento en el que las mujeres deban ser pacientes. Estamos en una guerra y necesitamos luchar en ella con todas las habilidades y armas posibles. Las mujeres piloto, en este caso en particular, son un arma que espera ser utilizada.”

Desde finales de los años treinta, y gracias a la iniciativa que tuvo la primera dama de los Estados Unidos y la afamada piloto Jacqueline Cochran, fue que el programa de las *WASPs* se convirtió en una realidad para mediados de 1943 y hasta finales de 1944, cuando el programa fue finalmente deshabilitado.²⁴² El concepto de una unidad de mujeres piloto resultó increíblemente revolucionaria para esos años. Anteriormente nadie lo había pensado. Dentro de la Fuerza Aérea era un programa al que nadie quería apoyar. Por ese entonces, eran contadas las mujeres que lograban conseguir licencias de piloto privado. No obstante, Jacqueline Cochran, la primera dama y una de las primeras mujeres piloto en conseguir una licencia, Nancy Harkness Love, lograron el apoyo suficiente para que se pusiera finalmente en práctica la formación de las *WASPs* (siglas que remitían al nombre de unos pequeños insectos voladores). Este cuerpo no era una reserva estrictamente militar. Tenían un estatus de civiles pero servían en tareas, trabajos y actividades militares, por lo que se puede considerar su estatus como “paramilitar”.

La creación de las *WASPs* respondió a la misma idea que la de los demás cuerpos y

²⁴⁰ *Vide*: <http://www.nww2m.com/2013/02/70th-anniversary-of-the-us-marine-corps-womens-reserve/> [Consulta 12/08/14] “over 200 different specialties including radio operator, parachute rigger, driver, aerial gunnery instructor, control tower operator, and auto mechanic.” T. A.

²⁴¹ *Ídem*. [Consulta 12/08/14]

²⁴² *Vide*: <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp-history.asp>. [Consulta 13/09/14]

fuerzas militares para mujeres: dejar que los hombres fueran a combatir, mientras ellas ocupaban sus lugares y trabajos en los cuarteles, aeropuertos y campos militares durante la guerra. Mildred Axton, una mujer de Kansas que se enlistó en el servicio, recuerda que:

Hicimos trabajos que todos los hombres estaban haciendo y enseñando y haciendo objetivos y probando aviones y trabajando para el clima, cualquier cosa y en verdad tuvimos más entrenamiento que los hombres porque los hombres... Teníamos entrenamiento básico y primario donde aprendías cómo hacer volar instrumentos en la noche y eso era bastante difícil y después de eso, los hombres escogían entre ser un piloto de combate o un piloto bombardero porque volar era muy diferente pero íbamos a volar todo, así que tuvimos ambos entrenamientos, teníamos más horas que los hombres cuando nos graduamos porque íbamos a volar todo lo que tenían, así es como estuvo, las mujeres piloto de la Fuerza Aérea. Íbamos a hacer el servicio para que los hombres pudieran ir y volar.²⁴³

Así pues, las *WASPs* fueron un grupo de mujeres reclutas que podría considerarse de elite ya que de las 25,000 mujeres que se enlistaron como posibles candidatas, tan sólo se aceptaron a poco más de 1,800 que al final de la guerra, en conjunto, lograron acumular alrededor de 60 millones de millas en vuelos que eran de reconocimiento o de prueba.²⁴⁴

Ahora bien, la propaganda y demás representaciones que se crearon para aumentar el reclutamiento de las mujeres de estas reservas y cuerpos militares fueron amplias y, oficiales o no, podían encontrarse en carteles, en la publicidad, en las revistas e, incluso, en varias películas producidas en Hollywood.

En el caso de los carteles, era muy común la representación de la mujer vistiendo los uniformes de sus respectivas reservas, con la mirada fija en un punto más allá de la mirada del espectador, que mostraba determinación e incluso, confianza. Comúnmente eran mujeres atractivas, bien peinadas y que no abusaban en la aplicación del maquillaje o de un excesivo arreglo personal, ya que eran aspectos que estaban estrictamente controlados. No podían usar rímel ni sombra para los ojos, la altura de sus tacones debía ser de una altura no mayor a los 3 centímetros, sus faldas debían estar cortadas justo debajo de la rodilla y el uso de medias de seda se limitaba a sus momentos de ocio.²⁴⁵ En la mayoría de los casos estas

²⁴³ Entrevista a Mildred Darlene Tuttle Axton. Transcripción no. 6. 20 p., p. 5. "We did jobs that all the men were doing and teaching and doing targets and testing planes and working for the weather, anything and we really had more training than the men because the men... We had primary and basic [training] where you know how to fly instruments in the night and that was pretty tough and then next, the men either chose to be a fighter pilot or a bomber pilot because flying was a lot different but we were gonna fly everything, so we had both training, we had more hours when we graduated than the men because we were gonna fly everything that they had, that's how it came, Women Airforce Pilots. We were gonna make service so the men could go flying." T. A.

²⁴⁴ Vide: <http://www.twu.edu/library/wasp-history.asp>. [Consulta 13/09/14]

²⁴⁵ "WAACs & WAVEs". En: *Life. op. cit.*, p. 75. Vide:

mujeres se encontraban enmarcadas por tres tipos de representación del deber patriótico: el primero de ellos eran las banderas estadounidenses ondeando detrás de ellas (Fig. 26); el segundo eran imágenes de soldados que recordaban a los hombres que estaban “liberando” y ayudando al reclutarse (Fig. 27), y el tercero eran los mensajes que buscaban convencerlas de hacerlo: “This is my war too!” (¡Ésta también es mi guerra!); “Speed them back. Join the WAAC” (Apresura su regreso. Únete al WAAC); “For your country’s sake today- For your own sake tomorrow” (Por el bien de tu país hoy - Por tu propio bien mañana); “Work to set’em free!” (¡Trabaja para liberarlo!); “Work to keep’em firing!” (Trabaja para mantenerlo disparando); “Nurse are needed now!” (¡Las enfermeras se necesitan ahora!).



Fig. 26. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Dan V. Smith. *This is my war too!*, 1942.



Fig 27. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Jes Schlaikjer. *Mine eyes have seen the glory*, ca. 1943-1944.

Al igual que en el caso de la WAAC/WAC, la propaganda de reclutamiento de las WAVES, se dividía tanto entre la que era de origen y producción oficial, como la no oficial, entre los carteles, las revistas y las películas producidas en Hollywood y por el gobierno. En los carteles de reclutamiento, muchos de ellos creados por artistas como John Falter,

http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=YIEEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA72&hl=es&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false [Consulta 20/08/14]

aparecen las mismas representaciones de la mujer que en los de la WAAC/WAC: mujeres atractivas, vistiendo el uniforme oficial de la reserva, mirando un horizonte más allá del ojo del espectador, flanqueadas por la bandera estadounidense y por los mensajes que la apremiaban a reclutarse: “To make men free, enlist in the WAVES today” [Para hacer libres a los hombres, enlístate en las WAVES hoy] (Fig. 28); “Bring him home sooner... join the WAVES” (Tráelo a casa cuanto antes... únete a las WAVES); “Another fighter released for sea duty by every WAVE” (Otro soldado liberado para el servicio en altamar gracias a cada WAVE); “Share the deeds of Victory” (Comparte las hazañas de la victoria); “It’s a woman’s war too!” (¡Es una guerra de mujeres también!); “He’ll be home sooner... now you’ve joined the WAVES” (Él estará en casa pronto... ahora que te has unido a las WAVES) o “Don’t miss your great opportunity... the Navy needs you to join the WAVES” (No pierdas tu gran oportunidad... la Marina necesita que te unas a las WAVES).



Fig. 28. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, John Falter.
To make men free, 1944.

También había carteles donde se incluían gráficas de la cantidad mensual de salarios que recibían las WAVES por rango, además de los beneficios en subsidios de comida y alojamiento (Fig. 29). Las WAVES recibían beneficios como éstos, además de los que se les otorgaba como seguro en caso de resultar heridas o fallecidas en cumplimiento del deber. Sin embargo, eran beneficios que no se equiparaban a los que recibían los hombres de la

marina, independientemente de su rango.

RATE	Monthly Base Pay-Clear	Food Allowance	Quarters Allowance	Total Monthly Income
Apprentice Seaman	\$30.00	\$54.00	\$37.50	\$141.50
Seaman Second Class	54.00	54.00	37.50	145.50
Seaman First Class	66.00	54.00	37.50	157.50
Petty Officers	78.00 TO 126.00	54.00	37.50	169.50 TO 217.50

*Unless food and quarters are provided by Navy)
PLUS \$200. for clothing, the finest medical and dental care, special tax exemption, low-cost Government life insurance, and free mail, reduced rates on transportation, theater tickets, etc.

Fig. 29. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, John Falter. *What pay does a navy WAVE get?*, 1944.

Ahora bien, la propaganda que alentaba a las mujeres a unirse a las *SPARS* también tenía muchas similitudes con los carteles de la *WAAC/WAC* y de las *WAVES*. Estos mismos mensajes, formatos, simbología y discurso se dirigían a impulsar el deber patriótico. Las mujeres en los carteles saludaban al espectador, aparecían tomadas del brazo con el Tío Sam o de nueva cuenta con banderas ondeando orgullosas detrás de ellas. “Make a date with Uncle Sam, enlist with the Coast Guard” (Haz una cita con el Tío Sam, enrístate en la Guardia Costera); “The girl of the year is a *SPAR*” (La chica del año es una *SPAR*) o “Your duty ashore... his afloat” (Tu deber en tierra... el suyo a flote) (Fig. 30)

La revista *Life* imprimió varios artículos y foto reportajes dedicados a los diferentes cuerpos y reservas militares de mujeres entre los años de 1942 y 1944. En el caso de la *WAAC/WAC* y las *WAVES*, estos reportajes fueron: “WAAC. US women troop to enlist in army's first all-female force” [WAAC. Las mujeres estadounidense se preparan para alistarse en la primera fuerza totalmente femenina de la armada], del 8 de julio de 1942; “WAACS. First women soldiers join army” [WAACS. Las primeras mujeres soldado se unen a la armada], del 7 de septiembre de 1942 y “WAACs & WAVES” del 15 de marzo de 1943. *Life* también dedicó artículos a las mujeres piloto: “Girl pilots. Air Force trains them at Avenger Field, Texas” [Chicas piloto. La Fuerza Aérea las entrena en el Avenger Fiel de Texas], del 19 de julio de 1943 y a las mujeres marines, “Women Marines” [Mujeres Marienes], del 27 de marzo de 1944 (Fig. 31)



Fig. 30. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense. *Your duty ashore... his afloat*, ca. 1944.



Fig. 31. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense. *Be a marine*, ca. 1942.

En ellos se mostraba por medio de fotografías los deberes y las actividades cotidianas que llevaban a cabo: desfiles y marchas en sus campos de entrenamiento, disfrutando de un momento de ocio, en qué consistían sus exámenes físicos, sus entrenamientos y sus clases, con qué clase de prendas y colores estaban compuestos todos sus uniformes. También se exponían una por una la variedad de las labores que llevaban a cabo, además de que se hacía un sutil pero claro llamado: “Ustedes se han quitado la seda y se han puesto el caqui. Ustedes tienen una deuda con la democracia y una cita con el destino. Ustedes pueden ser llamadas a dar sus vidas.”²⁴⁶ Además de los foto-reportajes de *Life*, en el resto de las publicaciones hemerográficas como *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Cosmopolitan* o *Collier's* se publicaron periódicamente historias cortas, generalmente del género romántico, que involucraban a las mujeres del ejército. Algunas de estas historias manejaban títulos como: “The Seventh *WAVE*” [La séptima *WAVE*] (*Saturday Evening Post*, marzo de 1944); “A *WAC* at West Point” [Una *WAC* en West Point] (*Saturday Evening Post*, julio de 1944); “The Lt. Meets the *WAAC*” [El teniente conoce a la *WAAC*] (*Cosmopolitan*, julio de 1943); “We’ll never

²⁴⁶ “*WAACs*. First women soldiers join army”. En: *Life*. Vol. 13. Septiembre 7, 1942., p. 75. “You have taken off silk and put on khaki. You have a debt to democracy and a date with destiny. You may be called upon to give your lives”. T. A. Vide: http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=rU4EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA74&hl=es&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false [Consulta 14/08/14]

give enough” [Nunca daremos demasiado] (*Radio Romances*, abril de 1945) Estos títulos nos pueden dar una idea de la clase de contenidos que manejaban y que, aunque pertenecientes a la ficción, trataban de reflejar la realidad de la mujer en el contexto de la guerra.

Al contrario del caso de las mujeres en las fábricas y demás trabajos de defensa cuyas representaciones cinematográficas existieron pero fueron muy escasas, el cine se encargó de “validar y estimular la participación militar de las mujeres”²⁴⁷ con películas donde el aspecto principal a representar era el de la variedad en los contextos sociales y económicos a los que pertenecían las mujeres que se enlistaban en el ejército o trabajaban en las fábricas. Se trataba de enfatizar que las diferencias que, en un contexto diferente al de la guerra podrían separar a estas mujeres, dentro de éste resultaban insignificantes cuando se trataba de alcanzar el bien común de la victoria.

La mayoría de las películas de guerra, cuyas tramas y personajes estaban relacionadas directamente con las reservas y cuerpos militares de mujeres, tendían a establecer un carácter de comedia ligera o de enredos, en las que algunas veces se incluían números musicales, lo cual servía para darle ese carácter poco serio y más de entretenimiento pero sin dejar de lado los mensajes en favor del reclutamiento o de las razones por las cuales se buscaba que las mujeres se alistaran en el ejército o la marina.

Algunos ejemplos que engloban estos aspectos, son *Keep Your Powder Dry*²⁴⁸ donde Lana Turner interpretaba a una rica heredera que decide enlistarse en la WAAC/WAC. Ahí, la heroína se unía a un grupo de mujeres con distintos antecedentes socioeconómicos que al final lograban hacer a un lado para hacerse buenas amigas. *A WAVE, a WAC and a Marine*²⁴⁹ narra la historia de un trío de artistas del teatro de variedades que buscan una oportunidad en el mundo del espectáculo antes de ser llamados a ocupar sus puestos en los distintos cuerpos del ejército donde se habían enlistado. En *Here Come the WAVES*,²⁵⁰ la actriz Betty Hutton interpreta a un par de gemelas muy distintas una de la otra que trabajan como cantantes en un club nocturno, y que con la llegada de la guerra deciden enlistarse en

²⁴⁷ Susan Hartmann. *op. cit* , .p. 191. “validated and encouraged women's military participation”. T. A.

²⁴⁸ *Keep Your Powder Dry*. (1945) Dirección: Edward Buzzell. Producción: George Haight. Guión: Mary C. McCall Jr. y George Bruce. Música: David Snell. Fotografía: Ray June. Protagonistas: Lana Turner, Laraine Day y Susan Peters.

²⁴⁹ *A WAVE, a WAC and a Marine* (1944) Dirección: Phil Karlson. Producción: Lou Costello y Edward Sherman. Guión: Hal Fimberg. Fotografía: Maury Gertsman. Protagonistas: Elyse Knox, Ann Gills, Sally Eilers y Richard Lane.

²⁵⁰ *Here Come the WAVES* (1944) Dirección: Mark Sandrich. Producción: Mark Sandrich. Guión: Ken Englund, Zion Myers y Allan Scott. Música: Robert Emmett Dolan. Fotografía: Charles Lang. Protagonistas: Bing Crosby, Betty Hutton, Sonny Tufts y Ann Doran.

la reserva de la marina, una por su propia convicción y la otra después de enterarse que su novio fue reclutado. Sin embargo, también había películas que dejaban de lado la comedia ligera y se orillaban más hacia el drama. *Parachute Nurse*²⁵¹ cuenta la historia de un grupo de enfermeras en el contexto de la guerra en Europa que se unen a una recién creada unidad de paracaidistas que son lanzadas a puntos estratégicos en el frente para aliviar la necesidad de cuerpos médicos, donde ellas deben lidiar con los peligros que implican su trabajo, incluso padecer la muerte de una de ellas. *Cry Havoc*²⁵² cuenta las vicisitudes de las mujeres que se unieron a los servicios de enfermería de la armada en el teatro del Pacífico y que ven sus vidas en peligro durante la invasión japonesa a Bataan. *So Proudly We Hail!*,²⁵³ resultó una de las películas de guerra con mayor éxito de taquilla porque se comercializó como “la película de guerra más aterradora que ha llegado a Hollywood este año. La razón de esto es la autenticidad y sombrío realismo de la película.”²⁵⁴ En ella se abordan los altibajos que experimentaron en la vida real una unidad de enfermeras de la armada durante la invasión japonesa a las Filipinas.

2.2.3. Mujeres en la vida cotidiana

Todas las actividades que realizó la mujer durante la guerra, fuera trabajo en la industria bélica, dentro del ejército o como voluntarias de organizaciones de protección civil, las llevó a cabo dentro del *home front*, un concepto que desglosamos en el primer capítulo. Sin embargo, consideré importante marcar una diferencia entre este tipo de actividades y el resto de las experiencias que la mujer vivió durante la guerra, además de la forma en la que éstas fueron representadas. Por ello, el propósito de este subcapítulo, es ir más allá de las fábricas o los campos militares, para introducirnos en lo que fue el resto de la experiencia de la mujer durante la SGM.

²⁵¹ *Parachute Nurse* (1942) Dirección: Charles Barton. Producción: Wallace McDonald. Guión: Rian James. Música: John Leipold. Fotografía: Philip Tannura. Protagonistas: Marguerite Chapman, William Wright y Kay Harris.

²⁵² *Cry Havoc* (1943) Dirección: Richard Thorpe. Producción: Edwin H. Knopf. Guión: Paul Osborn. Música: Daniele Amfitheatrof. Fotografía: Karl Freund y Hal Rosher. Protagonistas: Margaret Sullavan, Ann Sothorn y Joan Blondell.

²⁵³ *So Proudly We Hail!* (1943) Dirección: Mark Sandrich. Producción: Marc Sandrich y Buddy G. SeSylva. Guión: Allan Scott. Música: Miklós Rózsa. Fotografía: Charles Lang. Protagonistas: Claudette Colbert, Paulette Goddard, Veronica Lake y George Reeves.

²⁵⁴ “So Proudly We Hail. Realistic story of nurses in the Philippines draws on *Life* pictures for authentic detail”. En: *Life*. Vol. 16. Octubre, 1943., p. 69. “the most terrifying war films to come from Hollywood this year. The reason for this is the authenticity and grim realism of the movie.” T. A. Vide: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=PlcEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [Consulta 19/08/14]

Como se mencionó también en el primer capítulo, una de las ventajas con las que contó el *home front* estadounidense, en comparación con el de los demás países, fue el hecho de que la guerra jamás tocó territorio estadounidense por lo que mientras el conflicto se desarrollaba en los lejanos frentes europeos, africanos y asiáticos, la gente que permaneció en casa pudo continuar viviendo sus vidas con relativa normalidad, aunque al fin y al cabo, era una normalidad condicionada. A pesar de las malas o buenas noticias provenientes del frente, el ciudadano estadounidense promedio continuó asistiendo a sus trabajos o a la escuela. La gente siguió acudiendo a los cines y a los teatros en busca de entretenimiento que los aliviara de alguna forma de las preocupaciones relacionadas con la guerra. Se trató por todos los medios de mantener la normalidad tal y como era antes de la guerra. La vida cotidiana, en fin, terminó por acoplarse a las necesidades que la reciente situación política requirió de ella, transformando para siempre el rostro y la mentalidad de la sociedad y, muy particularmente, de la mujer estadounidense.

Con anterioridad, hemos explorado la forma en la que la vida laboral y cotidiana se transformó para la mujer estadounidense en el contexto de la SGM y, si bien las tareas que ella desempeñó en el *home front* englobaron el trabajo en las fábricas y el reclutamiento en el ejército, también existieron los casos de aquellas mujeres que no se unieron ni a uno ni a otro y que apoyaron la causa desde casa, desempeñando las actividades con las que siempre se las ha asociado: las de ama de casa y de madre. Pero su participación en el esfuerzo de guerra no debe reducirse o desestimarse en comparación con las mujeres que fueron contratadas en las fábricas o enlistadas en el ejército.

El esfuerzo de guerra desde el *home front*, y no sólo desde el estadounidense sino también desde el británico, el canadiense e incluso el alemán, involucró campañas que ya habían sido empleadas durante la PGM. Una de ellas fue la del racionamiento de alimentos básicos como el azúcar, las harinas, el café, la carne, la mantequilla, la grasa vegetal, la manteca, además de una gran variedad de aceites y de alimentos procesados. Sin embargo, no sólo fueron los alimentos los bienes que se incluyeron en estas campañas, sino también la gasolina, las llantas de los automóviles, la electricidad, el aceite combustible, el carbón o los artículos y objetos fabricados con nylon y seda.²⁵⁵ También se implementaron campañas de recolección de residuos metales como el acero y el hierro. Así fue como autos y estufas viejas, ollas y aviones de juguete, herramientas y armas vetustas terminaron siendo fundidos

²⁵⁵ Alan L. Gropman. *op. cit.*, p. 107.

para la eventual construcción de los fuselajes de los aviones o las paredes que recubrían los tanques. El propósito era ahorrar y administrar todos estos productos con el fin de evitar la escasez y que en lugar de ser malgastados fueran aprovechados directamente para favorecer el esfuerzo de guerra. El racionamiento de estos bienes se convirtió en una preocupación más para las mujeres, una tarea más que llevar a cabo en el *home front*. El uso de estampillas de racionamiento se convirtió en una costumbre que se adquirió más por obligación que por voluntad propia. Estas estampillas eran emitidas por el gobierno para abastecer a quienes las tenían con los artículos y demás bienes que estaban siendo limitados al consumo público. Tal y como cuenta Helen Brown:

Durante la guerra necesitábamos estampillas de racionamiento para casi todo: zapatos de cuero, gasolina, medias de nylon, muchos comestibles. Nosotros vivíamos en una granja y teníamos la mayoría de nuestras frutas, vegetales, y carne. Si, como gente joven, no podíamos obtener, un galón de gasolina, la obtendríamos de la casa de un amigo [...]²⁵⁶

Irene Robertson, por otro lado, no consideró nunca el racionamiento como un infortunio, sino que por el contrario, ayudó al sentimiento de camaradería y cooperación entre las personas: “Oh, nosotros guardábamos nuestro racionamiento de gasolina y se lo dábamos al hombre que solía llevarnos al trabajo. Y recuerdo la carne, la cual no nos molestaba, y eso. Así que compartimos con la gente que no tenía.”²⁵⁷

Otro de los programas que volvieron a implementarse fue el de los “Victory Gardens”, el cual consistía en plantar pequeños huertos en los jardines traseros o en los parques públicos con el fin de aliviar el suministro público de comida.²⁵⁸ Este programa, aunque no estaba dirigido específicamente hacia las mujeres en el *home front* fue acogido por ellas lo mismo que por los niños.

La propaganda de los “Victory Gardens” y del racionamiento de bienes también mostraba a la mujer cumpliendo su deber con la causa. En ellos se reflejaba el mensaje de que cosechar su comida por su propia cuenta, mantenerla y conservarla en recipientes de vidrio, y racionarla adecuadamente también era una acción patriótica que ayudaba al funcionamiento y al éxito del esfuerzo de guerra (Fig. 32). Los mensajes en esta propaganda

²⁵⁶ Entrevista a Helen R. Brown. *op., cit.*, p. 2. “During the war we needed rationing stamps for most everything: leather shoes, gasoline, nylon hose, and many groceries. We lived on a farm and had most of our fruits, vegetables, and meat. If, as young people, couldn't get, could get a gallon of gas, we would get to a friend's house.” T.A.

²⁵⁷ Entrevista a Irene B. Norton Robertson. Transcripción no. 16. 13 p., p. 2-3. “Oh, we saved all our gas rationing and give it to the man that used to take us to work. And I remember the meat, which didn't bother us, and that. So we sort of shared it with people who didn't have it.” T.A.

²⁵⁸ Stuart A. Kallen. *The war at home.*, p. 57.

eran parecidos a los de las campañas de reclutamiento para las fábricas o para el ejército: “War Gardens for Victory” (Jardines de guerra para la victoria); “Plant a Victory Garden. Our Food is Fighting” (Planta un jardín de la victoria. Nuestra comida está luchando); “Dig for Victory. Grow your own Vegetables” (Cultiva por la victoria. Cultiva tus propios vegetales); “Your Victory Garden Counts More than ever!” (¡Tu jardín de la victoria cuenta ahora más que nunca!) o “Can All You Can. It’s a Real War Job!” (Embotella todo lo que puedas. ¡Es un trabajo de guerra real!)



Fig. 32. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Dick Williams. *Of course I can!*

Además de estas campañas, existieron lo que se conoció como los *Civilian Defense Armys* o ejércitos de defensa civil. Como su nombre lo indica, estaban compuestos por voluntarios civiles, mujeres y hombres no reclutados en el ejército, que se ofrecían a realizar tareas en beneficio del esfuerzo de guerra. En gran parte, el propósito también era liberar la carga de trabajo de aquellos hombres aptos para las fuerzas armadas de la misma forma que lo hicieron las mujeres que habían sido reclutadas en el ejército. Uno de estos ejércitos civiles fue el *Women's Land Army of America*, el cual adoptó los modelos de su similar británico que se creó durante la PGM y que en Estados Unidos se formó como parte de las *United States Crop Corps*. Las principales tareas de este “ejército” estaban muy ligadas al programa de los “Victory Gardens” ya que se dedicaban específicamente a la cosecha y a la

recolección de plantaciones -tanto de vegetales como de frutas-, al cuidado del ganado, al manejo de tractores en los campos de cultivo, en fin, a diversas tareas en todos los rubros de la producción de alimentos. La relevancia de este grupo de mujeres en la agricultura se notó en el desahogo de la demanda de alimentos que terminó por ayudar a la economía y mantener al país entero alimentado.

La propaganda que invitaba a unirse al *Women's Land Army of America* mostraba la importancia de las tareas que realizaba este "ejército". En general, eran imágenes de mujeres vistiendo el uniforme oficial compuesto por un overol y camisa azules con un triángulo en el pecho o alrededor del brazo que las distinguía como integrantes de este "ejército". Aparecían listas para trabajar los campos, recolectar los cultivos, cuidar de los animales, conducir tractores (Fig. 33) y con los mismos mensajes que las alentaban a realizar semejantes trabajos en nombre de una causa mayor: "Keep the Farms Going While the Men are Fighting" (Mantén las granjas funcionando mientras los hombres están peleando); "A Vital War Job. A Healthy Open-air Life" (Un trabajo vital de guerra. Una vida saludable al aire libre); "Now Farm Work is War Work!" (¡Ahora el trabajo de granja es trabajo de guerra!) o "Harvest War Crops" (Cosecha cultivos de guerra)



Fig. 33. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Hubert Morley. *Pitch in and help!*, 1944.

Otros grupos de defensa civil incluyeron a todos aquellos servicios de voluntariado que conformaron el *American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS)*, que para 1942 tenían entre sus filas a más de 10,000 “mujeres patriotas que dan su tiempo y esfuerzo sin paga y piden cómo recompensa únicamente la gloria de las insignias de un uniforme.”²⁵⁹ Esta fue la organización del voluntariado civil más grande en Estados Unidos durante la SGM y en términos generales coincidió con las tareas y objetivos de la Cruz Roja y la Oficina de Defensa Civil. Algunos grupos y fuerzas que formaron parte del AWVS fueron los *Motor Corps*, las *Air Raid Wardens*, las *American Women's Hospital Reserve Corps*, las *Women's Defense Cadets Corps of America*, entre otros. Las tareas y actividades de las mujeres que formaban parte de estos grupos se especializaban en conducir ambulancias, camiones pesados o cocinas ambulantes; *canteen work*, es decir, trabajos como cocineras y meseras en comedores y cafeterías; saber y aplicar los primeros auxilios y, en ocasiones muy particulares, disparar armas de fuego; transportar personal y material militar; hacer campañas para vender bonos de guerra; entregar correspondencia; combatir incendios; cubrir turnos nocturnos para vigilar los cielos en caso de ataques aéreos o hacer reconocimientos aéreos.²⁶⁰

a) La imagen de la mujer como amenaza

Sin embargo, en el *home front* también existió la representación de la mujer como una amenaza tal que podía compararse con la que representaban los nazis o los japoneses. Un peligro del que había que cuidarse para evitar perder la guerra. Estas imágenes de la feminidad amenazante eran las de la mujer como una de las principales instigadoras de lo que se conoció como la *careless talk*, es decir, la “charla descuidada”. Con esta campaña propagandística se buscaba evitar el espionaje provocado por el intercambio irresponsable de información.

Para evitar la “charla descuidada” se optó por la censura de las cartas que se intercambiaban los soldados y sus familias. A los primeros se les indicaba no obviar en detalles sobre los lugares del frente en los que se encontraban ni revelar información sobre las tareas o las campañas de las que formaban parte, mientras que a los segundos también

²⁵⁹ “Women in uniform march for a cause”. En: *Life*. Vol. 12. Abril 27., p. 39. “women patriots who give their time and toil without pay and ask as recompense only the glory of uniform insignia.” T. A. Vide: http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=G1EEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA39&hl=es&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false [Consulta 02/09/14]

²⁶⁰ *Ídem.*, p. 39-42. [Consulta 02/09/14]

se les pedía evitar revelar detalles sobre la situación que vivían en el *home front*. Esta fue una situación que no sólo se vivió en Estados Unidos sino también en los demás países aliados y del Eje. También comenzaron a circular carteles en los que se advertía de las consecuencias que podría causar la “charla descuidada”. Ciertamente, la campaña propagandística buscaba llegar a los más recónditos rincones de la conciencia al mostrar imágenes simples pero con una fuerte carga emocional. No fue necesario mostrar imágenes violentas de soldados ensangrentados, aviones explotando en el aire o heridas abiertas, sino que bastaba con simples imágenes de labios sellados, de barcos hundiéndose, de Adolf Hitler o de Benito Mussolini con los oídos atentos o de parejas compuestas por soldados y mujeres atractivas donde se daba a entender que el villano residía en la figura de la mujer seductora y con dobles intenciones (Fig. 34). Los mensajes que acompañaban esas imágenes también seguían esta línea de manipulación emocional: “Bits of Careless Talk are Pieced Together by the Enemy” (Pedazos de charla descuidada están juntados por el enemigo); “Free Speech Doesn’t Mean Careless Talk!” (¡Libertad de expresión no quiere decir charla descuidada!); “Keep Your Trap Shut. Careless Talk May Cost American Lives” (Mantén tu boca cerrada. La charla descuidada puede costar vidas americanas); “Mr. Hitler Wants to Know” (El señor Hitler quiere saber); “Americans Suffer When Careless Talk Kills!” (¡Los americanos sufren cuando la charla descuidada mata!); “A Careless Word... a Needless Sinking” (Una palabra descuidada... un hundimiento innecesario); “Pipe Down Slider. Berlin’s Listening!” (¡Cállate soldado. Berlín está escuchando!); “Don’t Kill Her Daddy With Careless Talk” (No mates a su papi con charla descuidada); “The Battle-wise Infantryman is Careful of What he says or Writes... How About You?” (El soldado de infantería sabio en la batalla es cuidadoso con lo que dice o escribe... ¿Qué hay de ti?); “A Careless Word... Another Cross” (Una palabra descuidada... otra cruz) o “Wanted! For Murder, her Careless Talk Costs Lives” (¡Buscada! Por asesinato, su charla descuidada cuesta vidas) (Fig. 35).



Fig. 34. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, John Falter. *Sailor Beware! Loose talk can cost lives*, 1942.



Fig. 35. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Victor Keppler. *Wanted! For murder*, 1944.

Una segunda imagen de la mujer amenazante tenía que ver con la salud pública. La representación de este tipo de mujeres radicaba en su profesión: la prostitución. No era ningún secreto que muchos soldados acudían con prostitutas para aliviar sus “necesidades”. En los carteles que buscaban crear conciencia sobre los peligros de contraer enfermedades venéreas, la mujer apareció y se convirtió en la figura única que englobaba los riesgos que podrían acarrear enfermedades como la sífilis o la gonorrea, las cuales causaban bajas importantes en las filas del ejército, similares incluso a los de una herida de arma de fuego. Al soldado se le advertía que tuviera cuidado de todas las mujeres de dudosa reputación o procedencia, porque aunque podrían parecer “limpias” aun así podían ser las causantes del contagio (Fig. 36). Otras representaciones eran más cínicas al mostrar mujeres con una clara pinta del bajo mundo, con los rostros sombríos, en un entorno enmarcado por la penumbra que caracterizaba los lugares donde era posible encontrar a las prostitutas (Fig. 37).



Fig. 36. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense. *She may look clean-but...*, ca. 1940.

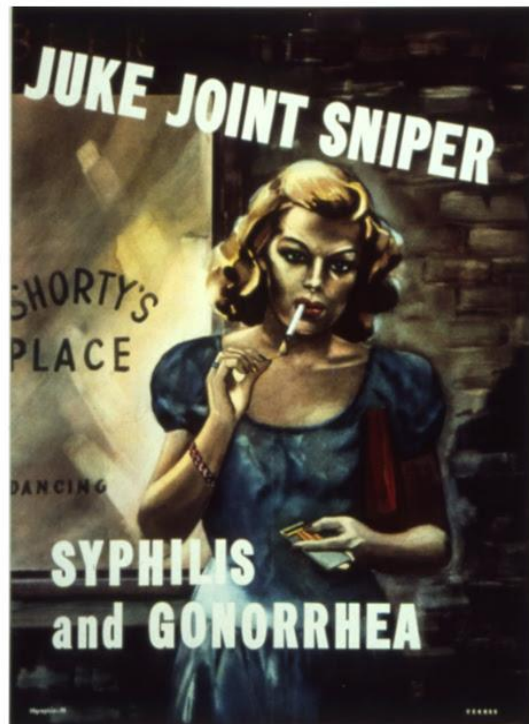


Fig. 37. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Fereé. *Juke Joint Sniper*, 1942.

Como ya hemos visto, el *home front*, sirvió de inspiración para *Hollywood* que durante los años que duró la guerra, produjo una gran variedad de películas que se concentraban en la forma en la que la gente vivía y experimentaba la guerra desde sus hogares y cómo afectaba la vida cotidiana. Una película que tuvo mucho éxito tanto comercial como de la crítica fue *Mrs. Miniver*,²⁶¹ la cual, y a pesar de que la trama está ambientada durante la Batalla de Inglaterra, fue una producción estadounidense estrenada cuando los Estados Unidos ya habían declarado la guerra. La película gira en torno a una familia inglesa de clase media y los obstáculos que deben superar desde el momento en el que Inglaterra declara la guerra a Alemania hasta los difíciles meses del *Blitz*. La figura y la representación de la mujer en esta película son interesantes porque aparece la mujer madura que es madre y cabeza de familia, contrastando con la joven idealista y de buen corazón cuyo destino es trágico. La mujer aparece como una inspiración tanto para el mundo ficticio retratado en el filme como para el mundo real, en el cual miles de mujeres se sintieron identificadas con la Sra. Miniver, decir adiós a sus hijos y a sus esposos reclutados en el ejército, vivir la tragedia de la guerra,

²⁶¹ *Mrs. Miniver* – Rosa de Aboengo (1942) Dirección: William Wyler. Producción: Sidney Franklin y William Wyler. Guión: Arthur Wimperis, George Froeschel, James Hilton y Claudine West. Música: Herbert Stothart. Fotografía: Joseph Ruttenberg. Protagonistas: Greer Garson, Walter Pidgeon y Teresa Wright.

sufrir la muerte de un ser querido y las privaciones que la guerra ocasionó. *Mrs. Miniver* fue de esos contados casos en el que una película de guerra logró trascender la barrera del tiempo.

*Since you went away*²⁶² también fue otra película que se concentraba en la figura de la mujer en el *home front* y las situaciones que enfrentaron al quedarse solas. En cierta forma fue la respuesta estadounidense a *Mrs. Miniver*, donde un ama de casa promedio se despide de su marido que es reclutado en el ejército y se queda al cuidado de la casa junto con sus dos hijas. Las tres hacen frente a los problemas y las dificultades que a muchas mujeres se les presentaron en el contexto del *home front* durante la guerra. De nueva cuenta, es la figura de la cabeza de familia, la madre, la que resalta y hace frente a los racionamientos y la escasez, al amorío de su hija mayor y los inconvenientes del inquilino que recibe para cubrir la totalidad de los gastos.

En este capítulo reflexionamos en torno a la transformación de los papeles de la mujer durante la primera mitad del siglo XX. Al hacer un recorrido por la forma en el que ese cambio fue representado no sólo en los Estados Unidos sino en otros países como Inglaterra, Italia, Alemania y la Unión Soviética, descubrimos cómo fue que la mujer cambió constantemente sus tareas, actividades y la forma de ser concebida dentro de la sociedad durante los años que precedieron a la SGM, así como la forma de concebir su propia feminidad.

Primero, llevó a cabo un rompimiento si no total sí al menos importante con los papeles heredados del siglo XIX. Segundo, gracias a la oferta laboral ligada a la PGM, formó parte por primera vez de trabajos en los que parecía imposible que la mujer formara parte. Tercero, durante el periodo de entreguerras y con el surgimiento de la figura de la “mujer nueva” dio inicio un debate acerca de los papeles tradicionales que la mujer debía y podía jugar dentro de la sociedad, lo que terminó en una preocupación muy particular por retornar a los papeles que siempre habían estado relacionados al género femenino.

La mujer llegaba así a la SGM con una cierta generación de cambio dentro del núcleo social, familiar y laboral. Gracias a la magnitud y al impacto de la guerra en estos ámbitos, la transformación social e ideológica para la mujer sería considerable e influiría en las

²⁶² *Since you went away* – Desde que te fuiste (1944) Dirección: John Cromwell. Producción: David O. Selznik. Guión: David O. Selznik. Música: Max Steiner. Fotografía: Stanley Cortez, Lee Games, George Barnes y Robert Bruce. Protagonistas: Claudette Colbert, Jennifer Jones, Joseph Cotten, Shirley Temple, Lionel Barrymore y Hattie McDaniel.

generaciones siguientes.

De igual forma, se analizaron algunas de las representaciones propagandísticas, sobre todo norteamericanas, del periodo comprendido entre 1914 y 1945. Al conocer tanto los organismos que produjeron la propaganda como el entorno en el que fue creada y por qué fue necesario crearla, entendimos el lugar que ocupó en el imaginario visual de toda una sociedad y su funcionamiento, su éxito y su fracaso. Estos últimos aspectos, serán explorados con mayor profundidad en el capítulo siguiente.

Capítulo 3. La realidad en el *Home Front*

It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth.
I'm a woman,
Phenomenally.
Maya Angelou

Después del recorrido a través de los papeles cambiantes de la mujer durante la primera mitad del siglo XX que finalmente nos condujeron a analizar la contribución de la mujer estadounidense durante la SGM, así como la forma en que esa colaboración fue representada en la propaganda y los medios de comunicación, en este último capítulo, nos concentraremos en aquellos aspectos negativos que la propaganda jamás mostró. Los aspectos que precisamente trataron de combatirse con imágenes y mensajes ideales, en muchos casos utópicos, pero que no lograron eliminar las actitudes y formas de pensar tan arraigados en la idiosincrasia estadounidense. Comportamientos que, muy a pesar de la situación extraordinaria que significó la guerra, fueron imposibles de dejar atrás y mucho menos eliminar simplemente a través de la creación de imágenes y mensajes propagandísticos. Nos referimos a aquellas actitudes y opiniones que marcaron la clara diferencia entre el mundo ideal que se creó dentro de la propaganda y la mera realidad que enfrentaron las mujeres estadounidenses durante la guerra. Porque ciertamente su entrada a nuevos ámbitos de trabajo, a nuevos entornos no fue un camino fácil. Estas actitudes y opiniones, estas piedras en el camino fueron la discriminación, el sexismo, la misoginia, la hostilidad, la indiferencia, la segregación racial; es decir, conductas y reacciones de la sociedad, y de las mujeres en particular, que demostraron la resistencia a aceptar que los papeles de la mujer en verdad estaban cambiando.

La estadounidense era, al fin y al cabo, una sociedad dividida que pretendió mostrarse unida para hacer frente a una guerra que se basaba y se sostenía en las divisiones de este tipo. Sin embargo, estos aspectos sombríos siempre se mantuvieron ocultos detrás del discurso y la retórica. Resulta ingenuo pensar que la apertura de nuevos entornos para la mujer estadounidense durante la SGM por más innovador que esto resultara, iba a resolver repentinamente la desigualdad y la discriminación de género, de la misma forma en que resulta iluso pensar que el hecho de lograr el derecho al voto para la mujer iba a cambiar el lugar que ocupaba ella dentro de la sociedad tan sólo unos años antes.²⁶³

²⁶³ Carl N. Degler. *op. cit.*, p. 56.

Los obstáculos y problemáticas que la mujer encontró en su paso por el trabajo fabril, el ejército o la vida cotidiana del *home front* no se redujeron únicamente, como se vio en el capítulo anterior, a las preocupaciones que causaba en el resto de la sociedad. En el caso, por ejemplo, de la mujer en las fábricas y los astilleros, existió una particular resistencia por parte de los empleadores y los dueños de éstos por aceptar mujeres en sus líneas de ensamblaje. Para finales de 1942, a pesar de que ya se había puesto en marcha la *Womanpower Campaign* y de que el gobierno había reiterado constantemente la importancia de que a ellas se le abrieran las puertas de estos trabajos, “los empleadores insistían en que las mujeres eran inadecuadas para más de la mitad de las necesidades de mano de obra.”²⁶⁴

3.1. La familia

Un caso de hostilidad muy particular fue el que enfrentaron las mujeres de familia que se unieron al trabajo pesado en las fábricas. Antes de la guerra, la actitud acerca de la mujer casada y con hijos que trabajaba era muy clara. Durante gran parte de los años veinte y de los años treinta, en gran parte de los países de Europa –salvo los países Escandinavos–, se atacó constantemente y se repudió públicamente a la mujer casada que trabajaba.²⁶⁵ En los Estados Unidos, se reflejó en las leyes que, tan sólo en 26 estados, restringían las labores fuera de casa para la mujer. Obviamente, después de Pearl Harbor, estas leyes cambiaron sus estatutos para acomodar las crecientes necesidades que el esfuerzo de guerra demandaba de sus ciudadanos. La mujer de familia terminó por unirse al trabajo que favorecería la pronta victoria, de eso no hay duda alguna, sin embargo, las opiniones de la sociedad en torno a ella serían las mismas de siempre. Este es un aspecto que está lleno de aspectos negativos que ni el gobierno ni la propaganda pudieron resolver con las campañas que lanzaron para evitarlos.

El primero de ellos fue la oposición de los maridos²⁶⁶ a que abandonaran las labores del hogar para trabajar en una fábrica con la posibilidad de que, en algunos casos, llegaran a

²⁶⁴ Maureen Honey. *op. cit.*, p. 29. “employers insisted that women were unsuitable for over half their labor needs.” T. A.

²⁶⁵ June Hannam. *op., cit.*, pp. 154 y 155.

²⁶⁶ Es importante hacer notar que no todos los hombres estadounidenses sirvieron en el ejército. De 1941 a 1945, el número total de hombres que sirvieron en el ejército (incluyendo la marina, los marines y la Guardia Costera) fue de alrededor de 38 millones. El 38.8% fueron voluntarios y el 61.2% fueron reclutas. De los reclutas, el 35.8% fueron rechazados por no estar calificados mental o físicamente para el servicio. *Vide*: <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/ww2-by-the-numbers/us-military.html> [Consulta 6/04/15]

ganar más dinero que ellos.²⁶⁷ Estadísticamente se tiene el dato de que uno de cada tres maridos estaba dispuesto o aceptaba la idea de dejar que sus esposas trabajaran, no sólo en las fábricas sino en cualquier tipo de trabajo.²⁶⁸ Este hecho demuestra el por qué las mujeres se abstenían de entrar a la fuerza de trabajo: para los maridos y padres de familia, el lugar de la mujer estaba en el hogar a pesar de todo. El papel de la mujer era el que ejercía dentro de sus responsabilidades como ama de casa y madre, mientras que el del hombre ejercía el papel del proveedor.

Segundo, hay que tomar en cuenta el hecho de que la mujer casada, en particular durante los primeros años de la guerra, consideraba lejana la posibilidad del trabajo pesado y aparentemente le disgustaba el hecho de que existiera la posibilidad de ser empleada.²⁶⁹ Para 1942, las encuestas del gobierno indicaban que sólo 33 por ciento de las mujeres casadas y sin hijos estaban dispuestas a trabajar fuera de casa, mientras que un 19 por ciento de las mujeres casadas y con hijos lo estaban también.²⁷⁰

Tercero, la actitud de la sociedad hacia la mujer casada y mucho más hacia la que tenía hijos, era de total desaprobación, especialmente si estos eran hijos pequeños. Todo ello debido a que se pensaba, de nueva cuenta, que la ausencia de la mujer en su hogar, además de dejar de lado sus tareas dentro del núcleo familiar, aumentaría el índice de delincuencia juvenil, influiría en la mala educación y terminaría por interrumpir el sano crecimiento de los hijos. Lo que encontraba la mujer casada y con hijos al momento de decidir unirse a la fuerza de trabajo fabril o las fuerzas militares era una opinión pública que por todos los medios buscaba disuadirla de tomar tal decisión. Socialmente corría la idea de que las madres trabajadoras que “orgullosamente [estaban] ganando la guerra en la línea de producción, la perdían en el *home front*.”²⁷¹ Además de este tipo de acusaciones, también se sumaban las que se hacía sobre la vida sexual de las mujeres. Por un lado se pretendía mantener y estimular los roles maternos pero por otro, se pretendía controlar precisamente la forma en la que se alcanzaba la maternidad. Esto es, que la vida sexual de las mujeres en el *home front* pasó a convertirse en una preocupación y una fuente de escrutinio por parte tanto de la sociedad como del gobierno mismo. Se quería evitar a toda costa que el contexto

²⁶⁷ Maureen Honey. *op. cit.*, p. 174.

²⁶⁸ George H. Roeder. *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁶⁹ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 778.

²⁷⁰ George H. Roeder. *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁷¹ Susan Hartmann. *op. cit.*, p. 82. “proudly winning the war on the production line, are losing it on the *home front*.” T. A.

caótico de la guerra diera pie a la promiscuidad sexual de ellas provocada por la ausencia del hombre, fuera este un padre, un esposo, un hermano, es decir los que ejercerían el papel protector de la decencia de la mujer.²⁷²

De los veinticuatro testimonios que analizamos en esta tesis, sólo tres mujeres se encontraban casadas y con hijos en el momento en el que Estados Unidos declaró la guerra (Ver Gráfica 4 y 8): Mildred Axton, quien recordemos se enlistó voluntariamente en las *WASPs*; Sarah Craig, quien laboró en una fábrica de Boeings, y Meda Brendall, quien trabajó como soldadora en un astillero de Baltimore. Mientras que tres de ellas: Anelle Bulecheck, voluntaria de las *WASPs*, Dorothy Jeannette Mobley, una *Rosie* y Mary Elizabeth Dorety, enlistada de las *WAVES*, se casaron mientras la guerra estaba aún en curso. La primera en 1944, la segunda alrededor de 1943 y con el nacimiento de su hijo ocurriendo al año siguiente, y la tercera unos meses antes de terminado el conflicto en 1945. Mildred Axton, particularmente, recuerda que:

Aunque yo estaba felizmente casada, mucha gente pensó que mi matrimonio se estaba derrumbando cuando me fui y mi mamá y mi papá me dijeron: “Pero claro que tienes que ir”, y ellos cuidaron de nuestra pequeña hija y supe que ella estaría bien con ellos y que no se acordaría de ello y mi marido estuvo de acuerdo porque eran tales las situaciones desesperadas en Guadalcanal, es por eso que fui y mucha gente nunca podría entender que yo posiblemente... bueno, mira ahora, la mitad de los hombres y las mujeres están yendo, que tienen hijos, lo hacen porque sienten que son necesitados y yo sabía que era necesitada y recé todas las noches por lograrlo y graduarme [...] Mucha gente no podía entender que yo podía perder a mi esposo, a mi bebé y eso era difícil, lloré hasta dormirme muchas noches.²⁷³

La situación de Sarah fue parecida a la de Mildred, ambas con un marido en el ejército (el de Sarah en la Comisión Marítima y el de Mildred como recluta en la Fuerza Aérea) y que además contaban con el apoyo de sus padres para hacerse cargo de sus hijos. Sarah recuerda que su pequeña hija no la pasaba mal ni cuando, y debido al trabajo de su esposo, debían trasladarse de un lugar a otro ni cuando, una vez que Sarah fue contratada en la fábrica, tuvo que delegar el cuidado de su hija en un inicio a su casera y después a sus padres.

²⁷² Nicole Ann Dombrowski. *op. cit.*, p. 19.

²⁷³ Entrevista a Mildred Darlene Tuttle Axton. *op. cit.*, p. 11. “Even though I was so happily married, a lot of people thought out my marriage was falling apart when I left and my mother and daddy said, ‘Of course you had to go’, and they took care of our little girl and I knew she’ll be fine with them and she wouldn’t remember about it and my husband agreed because they were such desperate strait downs in Guadalcanal, so that’s why I went and a lot of people could never understand that I could possibly... well, look now, half the men and women are going, that have children because they feel like they are needed and I knew I was needed and I prayed every night that I make it and graduate [...] A lot of people couldn’t understand I could possibly lose my husband and baby and it was hard, I cried myself at sleep a lot of nights.” T. A.

Para Meda Brendall, estar casada y tener un hijo tampoco fueron un impedimento que la persuadiera de no unirse al trabajo bélico en el astillero donde trabajó toda la guerra. Con una situación matrimonial difícil, (“Oh, sí, yo tenía un marido pero en ese entonces no nos llevábamos muy bien”)²⁷⁴ encontró, al igual que Mildred y Sarah, ayuda en terceros para el cuidado de su hijo; en su caso con la mujer que le rentaba la casa donde vivía. Al ser una mujer sin familia propia, la casera de Meda se encargaba de su hijo mientras ella cubría turnos en el astillero que abarcaban los siete días de la semana y con un horario de 6 de la mañana a 4 de la tarde,²⁷⁵ además de que le ayudaba con sus compras y otras tareas cotidianas como el resguardo de su correo.

Para estas mujeres no fue complicado armonizar el matrimonio y los hijos con el sentido de deber y responsabilidad hacia la causa común. Sin embargo, para el resto de las estadounidenses ciertamente fue una situación difícil. Muchas de ellas no contaban, como en el caso de Sarah, Mildred y Meda, con la aprobación de sus maridos, el apoyo de sus padres y la ayuda de sus vecinos o caseros para cuidar de sus hijos mientras ellas se encontraban trabajando o cumpliendo con sus deberes en el ejército, máxime que en este último caso implicaba, muchas veces, permanecer en los campos de entrenamiento por largos meses. Tampoco existía, estrictamente, un programa de guarderías patrocinadas por el gobierno, lo cual aumentaba la preocupación sobre quién se haría cargo de los hijos mientras ellas cubrían sus turnos; en algunos casos, se trataba de dobles turnos en las fábricas.

Es por estas razones, que tanto el gobierno como los empleadores de las empresas y los astilleros preferían contratar mujeres jóvenes y solteras. A ellas estaba dirigida gran parte de la propaganda debido a que se les consideraba como la mano de obra ideal porque no representaban una amenaza para el estatus. Se asumía que serían trabajadoras de corto plazo, que entrarían a las fuerzas de trabajo pesado únicamente mientras durara la guerra o mientras consiguieran marido y que una vez que la guerra terminara, ellas estarían dispuestas a abandonarlo sin presentar queja alguna o deseos de continuar trabajando.²⁷⁶

La propaganda jugaba un papel importante a la hora de mantener las ideas acerca del matrimonio, de los hijos, de la mujer en el contexto familiar. Le aseguraba a una sociedad insegura y dudosa de que los roles se mantendrían intactos antes, durante y después de la

²⁷⁴ Entrevista a Meda Montana Hallyburton Brennan. Transcripción no. 7. 13 p., p. 4. “Oh, yeah, I had a husband but at that time we weren’t getting along too well”. T. A.

²⁷⁵ *Ídem* p. 2.

²⁷⁶ Sherna Berger Gluck., *op. cit.*, p. 101.

guerra, ya que ésta representaba una situación extraordinaria que necesitaba de la cooperación de todos y cada uno de los miembros que integraban la sociedad. Sin embargo, muchas de las nociones que la OIG pretendía perpetuar—hay que recordar que el personal estaba conformado por hombres—, se vieron revertidas durante los años de la guerra.²⁷⁷ Precisamente, el de la mujer casada y con hijos que trabajaba fue uno de ellos.

3.2. La mujer “masculinizada”

Las mujeres en general -casadas o solteras, con estudios o sin ellos, blancas o de color- enfrentaron por igual las opiniones reprobatorias de la sociedad y de los medios de comunicación en relación al nuevo papel que ocuparon como trabajadoras de industria o como integrantes del ejército. Esto en el sentido de que, según la gran mayoría de estos sectores, influiría y propiciaría la transformación de la mujer femenina en una “masculina”.

En el caso de la radio, por ejemplo, y muy en particular en el caso de la mujer que trabajó en las fábricas como soldadora o remachadora, no sólo terminó por ser mal vista en las radionovelas -las cuales contaban con un público femenino muy amplio-, sino que también fue ridiculizada en los programas radiales de comedia más populares como el de Bob Hope o el de Jack Benny. En ellos, se recurría a clásicos recursos misóginos para burlarse de las *Rosies*, pintándolas a la vista de los radioescuchas como más músculo que belleza, siempre “machorras”, con bigote, tatuajes en los brazos, es decir, todo menos femeninas y delicadas.²⁷⁸ Todo lo cual lo único que hacía era minar los propósitos de la propaganda del gobierno por representar una mujer trabajadora pero siempre femenina. Una imagen que, como se ha mencionado previamente, era importante para conservar intactas las características tradicionales del género femenino muy a pesar de la guerra y los cambios que ésta comenzaba a traer consigo. Por ejemplo, en *The Pepsodent Show* de Bob Hope, eran recurrentes la siguiente clase de burlas:

- Frances Langford: Apuesto a que a estos soldados no les gustaría tu tipo de novia... la última chica con la que saliste era una soldadora en Lockheed!
- Bob Hope: ¡No lo era!
- Frances Langford: Bueno...lo único que sé es que... cuando la besaste, su puente dental se cayó, y ella tuvo que volver a remacharlo.
- Bob Hope: ¡Sí, pero arruinó su bigote haciendo eso!...²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Gerd Horten. *op. cit.*, p. 156.

²⁷⁸ *Ídem.*, p. 164-165.

²⁷⁹ “The Pepsodent Show”. Marzo 24, 1942. LC, Manuscript Division , 79862. Citado en: *Ídem.*, p. 164.

“Frances Langford: I’ll bet these soldiers wouldn’t like your type of girlfriend... the last girl you went out with was

O en *Jack Benny Show*, donde el comediante hizo de *Rosie* uno de los temas centrales para sus burlas y por ende, del ridículo:

- Jack Benny: [aprovechando el hecho de que él y ella estaban en un cine] Ella está en las películas, ya sabes.
- Mary Livingstone: Ella trabaja en un astillero.
- Jack Benny: Ella no lo hace.
- Mary Livingstone: Me gustaría tener cinco centavos por cada remache que ella ha atrapado en su cubeta.
- Jack Benny: Está bien, está bien, es patriótico de las mujeres hacer trabajo como ese hoy en día... Pero ella es una chica hermosa y muy femenina.
- Mary Livingstone: ¿Femenina?... Tiene una serpiente de cascabel tatuada en su brazo derecho.
- Jack Benny: Bueno, si la miras de cerca, esa serpiente de cascabel tiene un rosa en su boca... Es un trabajo de dos colores... Tomé su mano mientras la tatuaban... De cualquier modo, esa chica está loca por mí.... ¿Has visto esas originales mancuernillas que me dio como regalo?
- Mary Livingstone: Originales es correcto, ella las sacó mordiéndolas de un tubo de plomo.²⁸⁰

Esta clase de burlas reflejaban el constante y permanente miedo a la “masculinización de la mujer” que, por otra parte, manifestaba también una burla que pretendía detener el impulso de ellas para trabajar en cualquier sitio antes reservado exclusivamente para ellos. Un miedo que, por supuesto, la propaganda pretendía y buscaba desaparecer con las imágenes de la mujer trabajadora que a pesar de todo, cuidaba de su aspecto personal, es decir, de aquellos elementos que la hacían ser femenina ante los ojos de los demás.

Juanita Loveless, una mujer texana que entró a trabajar en Vega Aircraft, una división de Lockheed, se encarga de desacreditar ella misma el mito de una mujer transformada repentinamente en un hombre únicamente por verse en la necesidad de usar pantalones o ropa que se consideraba tosca para la época:

a welder at Lockheed!

Bob Hope: She was not!

Frances Langford: Well... all I know is... when you kissed her, her bridgework fell out, and she riveted it back in.

Bob Hope: Yeah, but she ruined her mustache doing it!” T. A.

²⁸⁰ “Jack Benny Show”. Noviembre 1, 1942. UCLA, Special Collections, Jack Benny Collection, Box 26. Citado en: *Ídem.*, p. 165. “Jack Benny [picking up the fact that they were in the movie theater] She’s in the pictures herself, you know.

Mary Livingstone: She works in a shipyard.

Jack Benny: She does not.

Mary: I wish I had a nickel for every rivet she’s caught in her bucket.

Jack Benny: All right, all right, it’s patriotic for women to do work like that nowadays... But she’s a beautiful girl and very feminine.

Mary Livingstone: Feminine?... She’s got a rattlesnake tattooed on her right arm.

Jack Benny: Well, if you look close, that rattlesnake has a rose in its mouth... It’s a two-color job... I held her hand while she got the needle... Anyway, that girl is crazy about me... Did you see those novel cuff links she gave me for a present?

Mary Livingstone: Novel is right, she bit’em out of a lead pipe.” T. A.

Los jeans eran resistentes y las pequeñas camisas estaban hechas de un material pesado y duro, y mientras más pesado y duro fuera el material mejor para mí, porque me impedía hacerme daño. Usé alguna clase de gorra que tenía una red y una visera, y te colocabas tus gafas. Algunas mujeres usaban pañuelos en la cabeza. La mayoría de nosotras eventualmente terminábamos cortándonos el cabello, esa fue otra razón por la cual decían que las mujeres se hicieron muy masculinas durante la guerra. Yo estoy en desacuerdo.²⁸¹

En el número del 6 de julio de 1942, la revista *Life* publicó, dentro de su sección de cartas y fotos a la editorial, el comentario de un lector de Kansas el cual hacía acompañar con la fotografía de una joven remachadora, quien se pintaba los labios usando como espejo el acabado de aluminio para uno de los aviones que ella ayudaba a producir. El lector, llamado Louis C. Nelson, señalaba:

Como uno de los muchos que se oponen a que las chicas con glamour se olviden completamente de su deber como tal, me gustaría presentar esta evidencia de que no lo hacen. Sin inmutarse por la falta de tiempo y en los austeros alrededores de obrero de la planta de la Cessna Aircraft Company de Wichita, Kan., la señorita Mina Weber, remachadora de veinte años en el departamento de chapa de metal, usa el acabado de espejo de una hoja de aluminio para hacer lo que tengo entendido es técnicamente llamado refrescar su maquillaje. Entiendo que esto es excelente para la moral femenina- y créanme, para la nuestra.²⁸²

El maquillaje, en particular, se convirtió en un elemento de vital importancia durante la guerra, no sólo para la mujer sino para el gobierno, las empresas de maquillaje y las instituciones encargadas de la propaganda. La unión de estos organismos significó la consolidación de algo tan simple y cotidiano como el cosmético en un instrumento más para convencer a la mujer de unirse a los trabajos en el *home front*. Se buscaba representar a la mujer trabajadora y a la mujer militar conservando su feminidad precisamente con la ayuda del maquillaje, especialmente el lápiz labial. Entre las *WAAC/WAC* se originó una canción que entonaban de la siguiente forma:

²⁸¹ Sherna Berger Gluck., *op. cit.*, p. 136. "Jeans were sturdy and the little shirts were made of heavy, tough material, and the heavier and tougher the material the better for me, because it kept me from getting hurt. I wore some kind of a cap that had a net and a bill and you put your goggles on. Some women wore bandanas. Most of us eventually ended up with our hair cut short, that's another reason they say the women became very masculine during the war. I disagree." T. A.

²⁸² "Preen-up time". En: *Life*. Vol. 13. Julio 6, 1942., p. 90. "As one of many who are opposed to glamor girls ever completely forgetting their duty as such, I would like to present this evidence that they do not. Undeterred by the lack of time and the stern workmanlike surroundings of the Cessna Aircraft Company plant of Wichita, Kan., Miss Mina Weber, 20-year-old riveter in the sheet-metal department, uses the mirror-finish of a sheet of aluminum to do what I gather is technically called freshening up her make-up. I understand this is excellent for female morale- and believe me, for ours." T. A. Vide: http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=400EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA84&hl=es&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false [Consulta 17/09/14]

Pantalones holgados, camisa caqui / Sin ninguna oportunidad de usar una falda / Siempre sabemos dónde estamos / Dentro de una cerca de alambre de púas... / Pero una sonrisa, un destello, un movimiento de la cabeza / Y un toque de lápiz labial, rojo victoria / Un modo amigable, una alegre conversación / Y los GI's aparecen detrás de cada árbol. ¡Seguimos siendo mujeres a pesar de todo!²⁸³

Leonora Whildin, italoamericana originaria de Boston, trabajó en una pequeña fábrica de interruptores durante los primeros años de la guerra antes de enlistarse en las *Cadet Nurse Corps*. Ella no se consideraba propiamente una *Rosie* a pesar de trabajar con clavijas. Ella se veía a sí misma como una más de su familia que colaboraba en el esfuerzo de guerra como su madre, quien trabajó en una fábrica de chocolates para el ejército; su hermana, que se enlistó en las *WAAC/WAC*, y su hermano, que sirvió en el frente del Pacífico. Cuando la cuestionaron sobre si consideraba que su trabajo con los interruptores era una especialidad propia de los hombres, ella respondió:

Eso creo, sí. Supongo, en cierto sentido, podría ser llamado un trabajo sucio, y las mujeres no hacían trabajos sucios en ese entonces. Pero requería de trabajo de fundidora, y los tornos y los taladros. Estoy bastante segura... La parte de sentarse, tal vez habrían tenido a algunas mujeres haciéndolo, pero no muchas. Si tenían mujeres, ellas estarían en la oficina. Ahora que lo pienso, no supe de nadie-- no conocí a ninguna mujer oficinista en aquel pequeño taller. ¿No es eso interesante?²⁸⁴

Ciertamente, la preocupación de toda una sociedad por conservar a sus mujeres como tales indica el grado en el que los estereotipos llegaron a influir en la decisión de la mujer sobre involucrarse o no en las actividades que se esperaba que ellas llevaran a cabo dentro del contexto bélico. La belleza y el trabajo pesado parecían irreconciliables, hasta que ejemplos como el de aquel lector de la revista *Life*, la enérgica discrepancia de Juanita o el número de mujeres que en verdad se ofrecieron para trabajar en las fábricas o para enlistarse en el ejército demuestran que tal vez resultó más importante el sentido del deber, las oportunidades de ganar un buen sueldo y de hacer algo que, para estas mujeres resultaba importante, significativo y trascendente. Los temores de que de un día para otro, la mujer se transformaría en una “marimacha”, indiferente a la familia, a los hijos, al cuidado

²⁸³ Adrienne Niederriter. *Speak Softly and Carry a Lipstick: Government Influence on Female Sexuality Through Cosmetics during WWII.*, p. 5. “Baggy trousers, khaki shirt; Never a chance to wear a skirt; Always knowing where we’re at--; Inside a barbed wire fence...; But a smile, a glint, a flick of the head; And a dash of lipstick, victory red; A friendly manner, a gay repartee; And the GI’s appear from behind every tree. We’re still women after all!” T. A. *Vide*: <http://twp.duke.edu/uploads/assets/Neiderriter%281%29.pdf> [Consulta 4/12/14]

²⁸⁴ Entrevista a Leonora Porreca Whildin. Transcripción no. 4. 27 p., p. 10. “I believe so, yes. I guess, in a sense, it would be called like an unclean job, and women didn’t do unclean jobs then. But it required forge work, and the lathes and the drill presses. I’m pretty sure.... The sit-down part, maybe they would have had some women do, but not too many. If they had women, they’d be in the office. Come to think of it, I don’t know anybody-- I didn’t meet any office women in that little shop. Isn’t that interesting?” T. A.

personal y a todos aquellos aspectos que se consideraban exclusivos, inherentes y tradicionales del género femenino, fueron reales y difíciles de cambiar en esos momentos.

3.3. La segregación racial y la discriminación

¿Qué otros problemas u obstáculos existieron y minaron de alguna u otra forma la experiencia laboral, militar y dentro de la vida cotidiana de la mujer estadounidense durante la SGM? Sin duda alguna, uno de ellos fue la discriminación y la segregación racial aún tan arraigadas dentro de la sociedad a pesar de que la esclavitud en Estados Unidos había sido abolida hacía más de setenta años.

Los afroamericanos formaban parte activa de la sociedad estadounidense. Tenían trabajos, acudían a las escuelas, editaban periódicos, actuaban en películas... Sin embargo, todas estas actividades las realizaban dentro del marco de una profunda segregación entre blancos y negros que se materializaba en una marcada dualidad dentro de las actitudes de la sociedad. Los blancos y los negros tenían sus propios barrios, escuelas, baños públicos, periódicos y cines. Así, al separar a los negros de sus ámbitos, los blancos enfatizaban en esa segregación. La mayoría de la interacción entre el blanco y el negro se reducía a la relación entre el patrón y el empleado, que en muchos sentidos recordaba a la que había existido antes de la abolición de la esclavitud. Gran parte de la población afroamericana continuó trabajando para los blancos: las mujeres como sirvientas y los hombres como empleados en negocios propiedad de los blancos.

Ahora bien, y como se mencionó brevemente en el segundo capítulo, si la mujer como género, se enfrentó a un camino hacia la igualdad de condiciones minado por la hostilidad, el rechazo y la exclusión, la mujer afroamericana se encontró con lo mismo pero agregando además el prejuicio y la marginación basada puramente en el color de piel. El camino para ella resultó el doble de largo. Sin embargo, como ya se mencionó, la SGM, se convirtió en el momento crucial en el que la comunidad afroamericana encontró la oportunidad de tener una variedad más extensa de opciones laborales, educacionales y de vida. Esto a pesar de la discriminación racial que sufrieron los afroamericanos en los trabajos en el *home front* y en el ejército, donde constantemente se repitieron los mismos patrones de segregación que en la vida cotidiana.

En el caso de las fábricas y astilleros, había departamentos exclusivos para blancos y negros, al igual que unidades militares completamente segregadas dentro del ejército. En el

ámbito laboral, la tensión entre blancos y negros en las diferentes áreas de trabajo ciertamente fue una realidad que el gobierno trató de controlar y ocultar. Así, por ejemplo, desde la Casa Blanca se buscó intervenir de manera general con la orden presidencial no. 8802 del 25 de junio de 1941, la cual estipulaba que:

No habrá discriminación en la contratación de trabajadores en las industrias de defensa o en el gobierno debido a etnia, creencia, color, u origen nacional [...] tanto empleadores como sindicatos tienen la positiva obligación de proporcionar la participación plena y equitativa para todos los trabajadores en las industrias de defensa.²⁸⁵

La propaganda, por su parte comenzó a representar al trabajador y al militar afroamericano con más frecuencia y con una imagen que despertaba mayor respeto.²⁸⁶ Había propaganda dirigida específicamente hacia los afroamericanos, con la cual se pretendía alentar e incrementar la mano de obra o el reclutamiento al incluir figuras de la comunidad negra como el marino Doris Miller, quien fue condecorado por derribar aviones japoneses durante el ataque a Pearl Harbor; o como Joe Louis, boxeador campeón mundial de peso pesado alistado en el ejército regular como soldado raso.

Sin embargo, la renuencia de las principales corporaciones de producción bélica a contemplar siquiera la posibilidad de incluir al afroamericano en las líneas de producción no pretendía cambiarse con prontitud, aún a pesar de las órdenes presidenciales o de las constantes peticiones del Ejército. A pesar de las razones patrióticas con las que se quiso justificar el trabajo del afroamericano en el esfuerzo de guerra, la realidad era que la división racial, resultaba un complemento esencial dentro la sociedad. Basta con hacer un recorrido por algunas de las reacciones de los directivos o miembros sindicales de algunas de las plantas más importantes de producción bélica. El presidente de North American Aircraft aseguraba con bastante convicción que “No vamos a emplear Negros.”²⁸⁷ La Standard Steel Corporation de Kansas City anunciaba que “va en contra de la política de la compañía. No hemos tenido un trabajador Negro en veinticinco años, y no planeamos empezar ahora.”²⁸⁸ Por otro lado, el organizador de la Asociación Internacional de Maquinistas le advertía a la Boeing Aircraft Company de Seattle que “a la clase obrera se le ha pedido hacer muchos

²⁸⁵ David M. Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 767. “There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin (...) both employers and unions have a positive duty to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries.” T. A.

²⁸⁶ George H. Roeder. *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁸⁷ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 765. “We will not employ Negroes” T. A.

²⁸⁸ *Ídem.*, p. 765. “It is against company policy. We have not had a Negro worker in twenty-five years, and do not plan to start now” T. A.

sacrificios en esta guerra pero el sacrificio de permitir a los negros la afiliación sindical es muy grande.”²⁸⁹

Durante el tiempo que duró la SGM para los Estados Unidos también se llevaron a cabo constantes manifestaciones de inconformidad y de odio. Éstas fueron comunes y se dieron a todo lo largo del territorio estadounidense y las llevaron a cabo hombres y mujeres. Se pueden citar algunos casos emblemáticos. Por ejemplo está el de un grupo de empleadas de la fábrica Western Electric en Baltimore que cerraron la planta protestando por tener que compartir los sanitarios con sus compañeras afroamericanas.²⁹⁰ Otro caso proviene de Mobile, uno de los pueblos con mayor flujo de empleo y producción bélica. Este poblado, situado en el estado de Alabama, fue donde en 1943 los trabajadores blancos de un astillero se alzaron en contra del ascenso de soldados negros, llegando a lastimar violentamente casi a una docena de ellos.²⁹¹ En Texas, por su parte, las protestas y la inconformidad alcanzaron niveles alarmantes de violencia cuando grupos de blancos se abalanzaron en los vecindarios afroamericanos matando e hiriendo a docenas de negros en protesta por recortes en las viviendas y las escuelas.²⁹² La entrada de los afroamericanos al ejército también estuvo acompañada de inconformidades y protestas de la misma forma que en el caso de los trabajadores en las fábricas. En enero de 1942, en la localidad de Alexandria, en el estado de Luisiana, un soldado afroamericano se negó a ser arrestado por un policía blanco lo cual provocó una confrontación grupal violenta teniendo por resultado que 29 soldados afroamericanos quedaran heridos, uno de ellos en condición crítica. Al respecto se generaron rumores de que cuatro soldados afroamericanos habían muerto, todo lo cual fue acallado por el ejército.²⁹³

En todo caso, en muchas ocasiones, se delegaron los trabajos más pesados a los trabajadores afroamericanos no importando su sexo, como cuenta Fanny Christina Hill:

²⁸⁹ *Ídem.*, p. 765. “Labor has been asked to make many sacrifices in this war, but the sacrifice of allowing blacks into union membership is too great.” T. A.

²⁹⁰ *Ídem.*, p. 770.

²⁹¹ *Ídem.*

²⁹² *Ídem.*

²⁹³ “Negroes at war. All they want is a fair chance to fight”. *Life*. Vol. 12. Junio 15, 1942., p. 86. La revista *Life* del 15 de junio de 1942 publicó un fotoreportaje de 10 páginas titulado “Negroes at war. All they want is a fair chance to fight.” [Negros en guerra. Todo lo que ellos quieren es una oportunidad justa para combatir] en el que, además de dar un acercamiento a aquellos afroamericanos de recién ingreso a las fuerzas del ejército mediante un breve recorrido histórico por la participación del afroamericano en las guerras estadounidenses y por las actividades que realizaban actualmente, se menciona el caso de los revuelos dentro del ejército provocados por las tensiones entre blancos y negros. *Vide*: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=PFAEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [Consulta 3/07/14]

Podía ver dónde hacían la diferencia al colocarte en ciertos trabajos. Tenían quince o veinte departamentos, pero todos los Negros iban al Departamento 17 porque no había nada más que hacer que disparar y cortar remaches [...] Tenían al negro haciendo esa perforación pesada. Pero cuando se daban cuenta cómo hacer que el taladro de prensa taladrara de una forma más fácil, se lo daban a una persona blanca. Por lo que sólo practicaban eso y aún lo hacen hasta el día de hoy. Es sólo que no sé si alguna vez eso se podrá poner en orden. Había algunos departamentos, donde ellos no dejaban que una persona negra caminara por ahí, muchos menos trabajar ahí dentro. Algunas de las personas blancas no querían trabajar con el Negro. Allí mismo encontraban los argumentos. A veces eran despedidos y salían por la puerta, pero sólo era una persona blanca más que se iba. Creo que aún en estos días en algunos lugares ellos aún no quieren trabajar junto al Negro. Pero ellos hacían todo lo que podían por mantenerte separado. Simplemente no les gustaba que un Negro y una persona blanca se reunieran y hablaran [...] Y te impedían avanzar. Siempre se las arreglan para darle a los Negros la peor parte del trato.²⁹⁴

En el caso del ejército, los afroamericanos ya tenían un historial dentro del servicio militar. Habían peleado en las guerras más significativas de esta nación abarcando desde la Guerra de Independencia, la Guerra Civil y la PGM. Sin embargo, prestaron su servicio en unidades segregadas y, desde la PGM hasta principios de la SGM, las tareas que se les asignaron fueron de carácter no combativo, relegándolos a cumplir su servicio llevando a cabo actividades únicamente en los campos de la servidumbre o del mantenimiento. En la Marina, por ejemplo, se les aceptó únicamente como cocineros, camareros o encargados de comedor. En el Ejército regular, para 1940, sólo había cinco oficiales afroamericanos, tres de ellos sirviendo como capellanes. Mientras tanto en la Fuerza Aérea y los *marines*, al ser ramas del ejército donde prestar servicio implicaba pertenecer a una especie de fuerza de elite, se les negó abiertamente el reclutamiento o el voluntariado.²⁹⁵ Fue hasta 1941, en el caso de la Fuerza Aérea, cuando se creó el grupo de aviadores afroamericanos de Tuskegee o como se les conoció popularmente: *Red Tails* (Los Colas Roja), quienes participaron en varias misiones de ataque, patrullaje y reconocimiento en el frente del Pacífico y del Mediterráneo. Ya para 1942, en el caso de los Marines, fue cuando se aceptó que los afroamericanos se enrolaran pero en unidades aún segregadas, que sin embargo, vieron

²⁹⁴ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 38,43. "I could see where they made a difference in placing you in certain jobs. They had fifteen or twenty departments, but all the Negroes went to Department 17 because there was nothing to do but shooting and bucking rivets [...] Okay, so they'd have the Negro doing that tough drilling. But when they got to the place where they figured out to get a drill press to drill that with-- which would be easier-- they gave it to a white person. So they just practiced that and still do, right down to this day. I just don't know if it will ever get straight. There were some departments, they didn't even allow a black person to walk through there let alone work in there. Some of the white people did not want to work with the Negro. They had arguments right there. Sometimes they would get fired and walk on out the door, but it was one more white person gone. I think even to this very day in certain places they still don't want to work with the Negro. But they did everything they could to keep you separated. They just did not like for a Negro and a white person to get together and talk [...] And they'd keep you from advancing. They always manage to give the Negroes the worst end of the deal." T. A.

²⁹⁵ David M. Kennedy. *op. cit.*, p. 765.

actividad en el frente del Pacífico, específicamente en la Batalla de Saipán.

Pero muy a pesar de la renuencia y el rechazo de los blancos hacia los militares y los trabajadores afroamericanos, existieron casos como los de las cuatro mujeres afroamericanas cuyos testimonios de guerra muestran casos concretos de adaptación y resistencia (Ver Gráfica1). Éstos fueron recogidos para la presente investigación, lo que nos recuerda que aunque fueron pocos los casos, las mujeres de color pudieron abrirse camino entre la discriminación racial (Fig. 38).



Fig. 38. Remachadora afroamericana en la Lockheed Aircraft Corp., Burbank, CA. 1943.²⁹⁶

Por ejemplo, el caso de Fanny Christina Hill, quien recordemos trabajó como una *Rosie* durante la guerra y después de ella, pues continuó trabajando en el mismo lugar por más de cuarenta años, precisamente, en la misma fábrica cuyo presidente juraba que no emplearía negros: la North American Aircraft. Sin embargo, Fanny pudo soportar la injusticia que enfrentaron tanto ella como muchas y muchos de sus compañeros trabajadores afroamericanos: “Yo era una buena estudiante, si se me permite decirlo. Pero me he encontrado a través de la vida que a veces, aunque seas bueno, simplemente no consigues los espacios si el color no es el correcto.”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ *Vide*: <http://research.archives.gov/description/522880> [Consulta 20/11/14]

²⁹⁷ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 38. “I was a good student, if I do say so myself. But I have found out through

La segregación racial en los cuerpos del ejército era igual. Mabel Anderson, afroamericana nacida en Tennessee, se enlistó en las WAAC/WAC y dentro de este cuerpo militar, sirvió en un principio haciéndose cargo del correo de su unidad y después recibiendo entrenamiento como médico técnico, gracias a lo cual pudo servir en el pequeño hospital ubicado en su campo de entrenamiento. Su experiencia dentro del ejército durante la SGM no estuvo carente de discriminación, según lo recuerda en una anécdota que refleja el grado de segregación que tanto ella como muchos otros compañeros y compañeras afroamericanos experimentaron dentro del ejército. Mabel recuerda que en el comedor del campo de entrenamiento de Clairborne, Luisiana, los soldados blancos se sentaban en las primeras filas hasta el frente, seguidos de las WAAC/WACs blancas y por último los soldados y las WAAC/WACs afroamericanos. Una división que a ella le pareció ridícula desde el principio:

cuando estaba trabajando en el hospital, cuando estaba en servicio, una noche no había muchos soldados en deber activo, tal vez, ya sabes, [éramos] doce y yo en todo el hospital cuando entonces entré [y] siempre tenía que hacerlo como lo hacía todo el tiempo, ir por mi plato y tomar mi comida atrás y comerla, por eso cuando decidí que no volvería allá atrás... es una cosa chistosa cuando pienso en Rosa Parks, me lo recuerda pero esto fue mucho antes que eso y ellos me dijeron que no me podía sentar en el frente del comedor, que tenía que irme a la parte de atrás y yo dije "Por qué me tengo que ir hasta atrás?, digo, hay bastante espacio", "Tú no puedes sentarte en el frente porque ahí está la parte de atrás, ahora vete atrás". Ahora, yo no veía porqué tenía que llevar mi comida atrás y comerla, ya sabes... nos hicimos de palabras y no recuerdo lo que dije pero me reportaron y a la mañana siguiente fui enviada al comedor y ¡caray!, casi lloro cada vez que pienso en ello... este hombre estaba tan enojado, golpeó en su escritorio "¡bam!": "¡Escuché que te sentaste en mi comedor!" ¡Oh, Señor!, estaba temblando en mis huesos, en verdad lo estaba y entonces dije: "No, yo no dije eso, yo dije que no veía porqué tenía que ir a la parte trasera del comedor cuando nadie estaba ahí". Luego le dije: "Lo siento", pero entonces [insistí y] le dije: "Bueno, si soy lo suficientemente buena para servir a los soldados toda la noche, ciertamente soy lo suficientemente buena para sentarme junto a usted en el comedor".²⁹⁸

life, sometimes even if you're good, you just don't get the breaks if the color's not right." T. A.

²⁹⁸ Entrevista a Mabel B. Wright-Laney Anderson. Transcripción no. 5. 13 p., p. 9. " (...) when I was working on the hospital, when I was going on duty, one night there weren't many soldiers on duty, maybe, you know, twelve and me in the whole hospital so when I got in I always have to like I did any time, go for my plate and take my food in the back and eat it, so when I decided I wasn't going back there... that's a funny thing when I think about Rosa Parks, it reminds me but this was long before that and they told me that I couldn't sit in the front of the mess hall, that I had to go to the back and I said 'Why I have to go in the back?, I mean, there's plenty of room', 'You can't sit in the front because there's the back, now go in the back'. Now, I don't see why I had to take my food in the back and eat it, you know... so we had words and I don't remember what I said but I was written up and the next morning I was sent for the mess hall and boy, I almost cry every time I think about it... this man was so angry, he hit on his desk 'bam!', 'I hear you went on my mess hall!' Oh, Lord, I was shaking in my bones, I really was and then I said 'No, I didn't say that, I said I didn't see why I had to in the back of the mess hall when nobody was there', so I told him 'I'm sorry' but then I told him 'Well, if I'm good enough to serve the soldiers all night, I'm certainly good enough to sit beside you in the mess hall'" T. A.

Christine E. Long fue otra mujer afroamericana que se enlistó en las *WAAC/WAC*, en la división de la fuerza aérea. Originaria de Kansas, para Christine la discriminación racial no le resultaba una actitud ajena ni extraña. Con anécdotas como la que ella relataba queda claro el abismo racial que existió entre los blancos y los negros en Estados Unidos antes, durante y después de la SGM:

Mira, yo vengo de Kansas. Kansas estaba tan segregada como Alabama, Texas, Georgia, lo que sea [...] un día yo quería un cono de helado así que las personas con las que estaba en el hogar me dieron algo de dinero para que pudiera ir por un cono de helado, ellos me dijeron que tenía que ir por la puerta trasera, así que fui a la puerta trasera: “¿Qué clase de helado quieres?”. Yo dije: “Un cono de helado de vainilla, con doble jarabe”. Le tomó mucho tiempo traerme ese cono de helado. Cuando [me] lo ofreció, estaba en una bolsa de papel al revés y era de chocolate: ellos no nos servían helado blanco.²⁹⁹

A pesar de la discriminación que Christine vivió a lo largo de su vida, fuera en el ejército o como civil, un hecho del que ella estaba consciente, no le impidió salir adelante y estar contenta y satisfecha tanto de su participación en la guerra como en su vida. Christine sirvió durante la SGM y la Guerra de Corea, obtuvo un título de la Universidad de Tuskegee en Salud y Educación Física y pasó el resto de su vida ejerciendo su carrera, enseñando en escuelas y centros de capacitación.

El caso de Violet Gordon también resulta excepcional dentro del ejército. Violet al igual que Mabel y Christine se enlistó en la *WAAC/WAC* y al final de la guerra, después de haber servido tanto en el *home front* estadounidense como en el frente europeo, fue dada de alta del ejército con el rango de Capitán. Ella recuerda cómo su reclutamiento fue más por obra de una amiga suya que por voluntad propia:

En ese entonces yo estaba trabajando para el Servicio Civil del Estado; supervisaba una oficina de transcripción estenográfica. No estaba aburrada sino ¿inquieta?, como atascada, supongo. Pero no estaba emocionada por entrar en algo que sonara tan estricto como el Ejército. Así que no lo elegí inicialmente [...] Por supuesto que había mucho de... este era un paso muy audaz de cierta manera. Uno tiene que recordar que en ese entonces el Ejército estaba segregado y número dos, que había enfermeras pero no había mujeres oficiales enlistadas formando parte oficial del Ejército. Claro que esto no sería oficialmente parte del Ejército; sería una rama auxiliar del Ejército. Había pros y contras, pero eventualmente cedí y apliqué [...] Así que, como empecé a decir, en realidad no esperaba ser seleccionada, pero al final lo fui, junto con mi amiga.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ Entrevista a Christine E. Long. Transcripción no. 10. 19 p., p. 18. “See, I come from Kansas. Kansas was just as segregated as Alabama, Texas, Georgia, you name it [...] one day I wanted an ice cream cone so people I was in the home with gave me some money so I could get an ice cream cone, they told me I had to go to the back door, so I went to the back door. ‘What kind of ice cream do you want?’, I said, ‘A vanilla ice cream cone, double dip’, took him forever to get me this ice cream cone, when they brought it, it was in a brown paper bag turned upside down and it was chocolate, they didn’t serve us white ice cream.” T. A.

³⁰⁰ Entrevista a Violet Hill Gordon. Transcripción no. 17. 14 p., p. 3. “At that time I was working in State Civil

Además de la discriminación hacia los afroamericanos, los hombres y las mujeres de minorías latinas, orientales y europeas también experimentaron situaciones que involucraban los malos tratos y la exclusión dentro de los trabajos y del ejército. Ni qué decir acerca de los judíos, quienes, y a pesar de que no fueron perseguidos como en la Alemania nazi, sí enfrentaron el rechazo de la sociedad. Esto ocurrió ya desde antes de que Estados Unidos se involucrara en la guerra porque a los judíos se les consideraba como los principales instigadores o interesados en hacer que la nación estadounidense se uniera al conflicto. Esto refleja que los prejuicios no sólo hacia las mujeres sino también hacia un grupo que en su momento se conoció como el de los “Negroes, aliens, and jews”, es decir los afroamericanos, los migrantes y los judíos estaba muy presente.³⁰¹

En el ejército se alentó no sólo a las mujeres blancas a unirse a los distintos cuerpos que existieron para el servicio femenino, sino también, como vimos, a las afroamericanas. Lo mismo sucedió con las mujeres de origen japonés³⁰² y latino, aunque obviamente y dadas las circunstancias del contexto, también existieron unidades separadas para ellas. Sin embargo, mujeres como Eva Romero y Margarita Salazar McSweyn lograron abrirse camino tanto en el ejército como en los trabajos en las fábricas sin encontrar alguna clase de particular discriminación por su paso. Así, mientras Eva se enlistó en las *WAAC/WACs*, en la división de la fuerza aérea, Margarita fue contratada para trabajar en una de las líneas de ensamblaje de Lockheed, además de que se unió como voluntaria en las *Civilian Defense Corps*.

La historia de Eva es ejemplar. Además de ser una de las primeras mujeres latinas en pertenecer al ejército, en su trayectoria se cuenta que ella fue enviada al frente del Pacífico en 1944, año en que permaneció estacionada en Nueva Guinea hasta 1945, justo cuando sirvió en Filipinas. Pero esto no fue fácil de conseguir, pues su ingreso al ejército fue más que nada por ser bilingüe ya que ella no cumplía al cien por ciento con los requerimientos físicos necesarios. Gracias a esto, las tareas de Eva dentro de su unidad, no se redujeron

Service; I was supervising a stenographic pool. I was not bored, but restless?, kind of stuck, I guess. But I wasn't that excited about entering into anything that sounded as regimented as the Army. So I didn't pick up on it initially (...) Of course there was a lot of... this was such a bold step in a way. One has to remember that at that time the Army was segregated and number two there were nurses but there were no enlisted or women officers as an official part of the Army. Of course, this would not be officially a part of the Army; it would be an Auxiliary branch of the Army. There were pros and cons, but eventually I did give in and apply (...) So, as I started to say, I really didn't expect to be selected, but in the end I was, along with my friend.” T. A.

³⁰¹ Eleanor Straub. *US Policy Toward Civilian Women during World War II* (Ph.D. diss, Yale University, 1973), p. 170, 33. Citado en: Maureen Honey., p. 29.

³⁰² Particularmente las mujeres de origen japonés, que al igual que los hombres que se unieron al ejército, quienes dadas las circunstancias en las que fueron tratadas tanto ellas como sus familias como prisioneros de guerra en campos de concentración pero que fueron llamadas a las filas de los trabajos en el *home front*.

únicamente a las del simple trabajo de oficina o de almacenamiento, sino que trabajó para el comandante de la base manejando información clasificada y haciéndose cargo de la censura del correo para evitar cualquier filtración de información. Al final de la guerra, Eva fue condecorada con seis cintas y una medalla de bronce por la campaña de liberación de Filipinas, y fue promovida al rango de sargento del Estado Mayor. Para ella, los prejuicios raciales nunca fueron un problema:

No, ya sabes, yo esperaba, cuando fui... porque yo viví en Nuevo México, fui criada entre la gente italiana e irlandesa, asistí a la Academia Saint Patrick y por eso me acoplaba muy bien, ya sabes, nunca hubo ningún tipo de prejuicio, en el servicio para mí, de hecho fui promovida cuatro veces en dieciocho meses y nunca había oído de alguien más que lo fuera. Tuve buenos jefes y nos llevábamos muy bien, todos, éramos muy compatibles.³⁰³

Por otro lado, Margarita, después de haber trabajado en un salón de belleza del “barrio” de Los Ángeles, entró a trabajar a una de las líneas de ensamblaje de Lockheed a los 25 años. Su trabajo en la fábrica, además de ser una nueva experiencia para ella, fue una forma de contribuir a la causa y de beneficiarse con una mejor paga. Ella cuenta que sus compañeras en el salón de belleza no alcanzaban a entender por qué razón había preferido entrar a un trabajo que se consideraba sucio y pesado cuando podía continuar en el salón que era limpio y decente. Y al igual que Eva, Margarita tampoco recuerda momentos en los que ella hubiera sentido el peso de la discriminación o del sexismo:

En nuestro equipo de veinte o treinta, había como cuatro hombres. Ellos pondrían el ala del avión en el lugar adecuado para que tú pudieras trabajar en ella-- moviendo cosas y haciendo el trabajo más pesado. Había algunas mujeres mayores que asumimos eran casadas. Había otras mujeres mexicanas, pero no recuerdo muchas chicas de color, no ahí en nuestra sección. Pero cuando íbamos al almuerzo, yo veía muchas de ellas. Todos nos reuníamos-- hombres, mujeres, mexicanos, italianos.³⁰⁴

Ahora bien, la discriminación que derivó en la segregación racial fue la más común y la que alcanzó mayores implicaciones dentro de la sociedad. Sin embargo, es importante recordar que la discriminación se estableció también en otros ámbitos además del étnico. Resulta significativo reparar brevemente en los demás tipos de discriminación que existieron

³⁰³ Entrevista a Eva Romero Jacques. Transcripción no. 9. 14 p., p. 11. “No, you know, I expected, when I went in... because I lived in New Mexico, I was raised among the Italian and Irish people, I attended Saint Patrick Academy and so I get along very well, you know, there was never any prejudice whatsoever never, in the service for me, in fact I was promoted four times in eighteen months and I haven’t heard of anybody else that was promoted. I had good bosses and we got along beautifully, everybody, we were just very compatible.” T. A.

³⁰⁴ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 86. “In our crew of twenty or thirty, there were about four men. They would put the wing in its proper place so you could work on it-- moving things and doing the heavier work. There were some older women we assumed were married. There were other Mexican women, but I don’t recall too many colored girls, not in our little section there. But when we’d go to lunch, I’d see a lot of them. We all blended in-- men, women, Mexican, Italian.” T. A.

en aquel entonces, ciertamente una época marcada por la intolerancia y la ignorancia.

Mencionamos brevemente la intolerancia en el aspecto religioso respecto a la población judía en Norteamérica pero, ¿qué hay de la gente con preferencias sexuales diferentes? Ciertamente identificarse como homosexual, bisexual o transexual, en el contexto de la SGM no era fácil. En Alemania, por ejemplo, los campos de concentración no sólo albergaron prisioneros de origen judío, sino también miembros de minorías como los gitanos, los testigos de Jehová y claro, los de preferencias sexuales distintas. A ellos se les identificaba por medio de un triángulo rosa y aún a pesar de que los demás campos y sus prisioneros fueron liberados, aquellos campos que contaban con prisioneros miembros de lo que ahora identificamos como la comunidad LGTB, no corrieron con la misma suerte. Esta clase de prisioneros fueron forzados a servir el resto de la sentencia impuesta en su momento por los nazis porque en Alemania este tipo de conductas eran consideradas prácticas criminales antes, durante y después de la guerra. Igualmente, en el Reino Unido, se consideró a la homosexualidad como un delito hasta bien entrada la década de los años sesenta.

En Estados Unidos, particularmente, la actitud hacia la homosexualidad y la bisexualidad fue similar a la de los demás países. A lo largo de la historia, el hecho de ser una persona con preferencias sexuales distintas a las que se consideran como las tradicionales y las convencionales ha resultado en la práctica de esas preferencias en la clandestinidad, rodeadas por un velo de mitos. En el contexto bélico y militar estadounidense, el hecho de pertenecer a estos grupos, por ejemplo, era razón suficiente para ser expulsado del ejército. La actitud de las fuerzas armadas hacia estos grupos fue una de completa exclusión. En ese entonces, y al igual que los demás grupos marginados y segregados por la sociedad estadounidense, la exclusión de estos miembros del ejército respondía a razones tales como que serían soldados de pobre desempeño, que su presencia dentro de los campos de entrenamiento podría amenazar la moral y la disciplina y, que en el dado caso de incluirlos, se daría pie a que el Ejército se convirtiera en un campo de pruebas para la experimentación social y sexual en lugar de ser una fuerza de lucha formal.³⁰⁵ Durante la SGM, muchos y muchas militares adoptaron una especie de código, en el cual era mejor ocultar sus preferencias frente a sus oficiales al mando y sus compañeros que arriesgarse a ser dados de baja de una forma por lo demás deshonrosa. Con el paso de los años ese

³⁰⁵ Allan Bérubé. *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II.*, p. 6.

código se conocería como *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* [No preguntes, no digas], el cual ha tratado de ser erradicado por los miembros LGTB del ejército desde la Guerra de Vietnam, cuando las circunstancias político-sociales de las décadas de los sesenta y setenta ayudaron a que más soldados expresaran con mayor apertura sus preferencias sexuales, con el fin de poder vivir sus vidas tanto dentro del servicio como fuera de él con igualdad.

Sin embargo, durante la SGM, las preferencias sexuales diferentes como la homosexualidad o la bisexualidad aún eran temas tabú. Por ejemplo, Violet Gordon recuerda cómo, en su posición como oficial en el campo de entrenamiento de Fort Huachuca, Arizona, le resultó difícil y estresante lidiar con los reportes de compañeras que se sospechaba eran homosexuales.

Quando nos dimos cuenta [o cuando fue llevado a nuestra atención por una de las sargentos] de que había actividad lésbica en uno de los cuarteles. No se nos había dado ninguna directiva especial en términos de cómo manejar algo así. Así que, fue una cuestión de tratar esto y tratar aquello. Básicamente, según recuerdo, el Comandante Oficial no lo ignoraba, habló directamente con las mujeres que habían sido señaladas [o cuyos nombres habían sido dados] y hubo cierta reorganización en términos de las asignaciones del cuartel. Nadie fue dado de baja ni se les dio marcas negativas. Creo que fuimos afortunadas probablemente en el sentido de que fue llamado a la atención de los oficiales desde el principio, así que hubo conocimiento en ambos lados. No sé si aquello cesó completamente, pero no fue lo suficientemente notorio para que fuera preocupante para las otras mujeres en el cuartel. Ese fue el primer problema disciplinario que fue inquietante.³⁰⁶

De acuerdo al historiador Allan Bérubé, la SGM marcó un punto de inflexión dentro de la historia de la sexualidad más o menos de la misma forma en que lo hizo para los afroamericanos y las demás minorías que se encontraban marginadas y ocultas. Este cambio se dio no sólo en los Estados Unidos sino en el resto del mundo también porque “A través de sus experiencias durante la guerra, un gran número de jóvenes gays y lesbianas llegaron a descubrir su sexualidad, y, después de la guerra, ellos ayudaron a construir la comunidad urbana que se han heredado hoy en día. En cierto sentido, la SGM podría ser considerada el momento de nacimiento de la historia moderna de los gays y las lesbianas.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ Entrevista a Violet Hill Gordon. *op. cit.*, p. 7-8. “When we realized (or when it was brought to our attention by one of the sergeants) that there was lesbian activity in one of the barracks. We had not been given any special directive in terms of how to handle something like this. So, it was a question of trying this and trying that. Basically, as I recall the Commanding Officer did not ignore it, talked directly with the women who had been singled out (or whose names had been given) and there was some reshuffling in terms of the barrack assignments. No one was discharged or given any negative marks. I think that we were probably lucky in the sense that it was called to the officer's attention early, so that there was awareness on both sides. I don't know that it completely stopped, but it was not flagrant enough that it was disturbing to the other women in the barracks. That was the first disciplinary problem that was troubling.” T. A.

³⁰⁷ Allan Bérubé. *op. cit.*, p. 4. *Vide:*
http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=_mfexYFbzL4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=ww2+lgbt&hl=en&sa=X&ei=lx5

Juanita Loveless, por ejemplo, recuerda a sus compañeras de fábrica que eran homosexuales y con quienes siempre llevó una relación cordial y amistosa:

Durante la guerra había mucha homosexualidad. Personas heterosexuales se hicieron muy amigas de personas homosexuales, más aún las mujeres. Yo no soy homosexual, pero tenía muchas amigas que lo eran, como la conductora del autobús, Margaret. Ella era muy alta. Y había una chica de aviación. Ella y Margaret siempre estaban en el autobús, aun cuando ella no estaba trabajando, yo decía: “¿Nunca se bajan de este autobús?” Yo percibía que había algo diferente acerca de ellas cuando les mostrabas una imagen de un novio o cuando hablaba de algún muchacho que conocía que iba a entrar en el servicio. Intercambiabas imágenes en las carteras, y verías una imagen de una WAC o una WAVE.³⁰⁸

De los testimonios recogidos para esta investigación, el de Charlotte Coleman es el único en el que está presente la homosexualidad. Charlotte se unió a las SPARS después de trabajar en una fábrica de torpedos antes de que estallara la guerra. Cuando se le cuestionó sobre si ella o alguna de sus compañeras había enfrentado casos de discriminación por su orientación sexual, ella respondió:

Ellos no lo sabían. Nadie lo sabía. No. Y yo no escuché de alguien ahí... sé que es en Long Beach, donde habían estado mis amigos ciertamente.... a ellos los golpearon, cortaron los botones de sus uniformes. Sí, hicieron eso en Long Beach.³⁰⁹

El caso de Charlotte resume en gran medida lo que muchos y muchas experimentaron durante esos años turbulentos y confusos: una oportunidad para descubrirse a sí mismos mientras se les presentaba la oportunidad de servir a su país y cumplir con el compromiso que éste demandaba de ellos y de ellas. Porque, y en palabras de la propia Charlotte,

Salí con la idea de que ingresar en el servicio sería bueno para todos. Ya sabes, tenías que vivir de acuerdo a las normas, tenías que hacer esto y aquello y cuidar de ti misma, teníamos que hacer todo por nuestra cuenta, nadie nos ayudaba con nada y eso era bueno. Fue un buen entrenamiento, ya sabes, pienso que fue bueno [...] Bueno, ciertamente sabes que en todos estos años ha habido muchas, muchas personas gays en servicio [...] Las personas

YVIOkEYGPYASppYKQAg&ved=0CBoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false [Consulta 4/11/14]. En este mismo sentido Ulrich Beck va a señalar que para la *realización* de la sociedad industrial de mercado, ésta siempre va a estar dispuesta a impulsar cambios sea cuáles sean éstos como “la *supresión* de su moral de familia, de sus destinos sexuales, de sus tabúes de matrimonio, paternidad y sexualidad, e incluso la reunificación del trabajo doméstico y del trabajo retribuido”. Ulrich Beck, *La sociedad del riesgo*, p. 183.

³⁰⁸ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 139-140. “During the war there was a lot of homosexuality. Straight people became very friendly with homosexual people, more so the women. I’m not a homosexual, but I had a great many friends who were, like the bus driver, Margaret. She was very tall. And there was one girl from aircraft. She and Margaret were always riding the bus, even when she wasn’t working I’d say, ‘Don’t you ever get off this bus?’ I sensed there was something different about them when I would show a picture of a boyfriend or I would talk about some fellow I knew who was going into the service. You’d exchange pictures in wallets, and you’d see a picture of a WAC or a WAVE.” T. A.

³⁰⁹ Entrevista a Charlotte N. Russell Coleman. *op. cit.*, p. 10. “They didn’t know it. Nobody knew it. No. And I don’t know anybody there that I ever heard it any, I know down in Long Beach where my friend had been, they certainly, and they beat them out, cut the buttons off their uniforms. Yeah, they did that down in Long Beach.” T. A.

gays pueden hacer el trabajo igual de bien como cualquier otro, sólo porque somos gays no quiere decir que no podemos hacer lo que se supone que debemos hacer. Ya sabes...³¹⁰

Además, la experiencia de Charlotte como miembro de las *SPARS*, con todo lo que aprendió, lo que vivió y lo que sus demás compañeros y compañeras LGTB vivieron, la impulsaron a abrir un bar llamado "The Front" [El Frente] que con los años se convertiría en un punto de reunión para el activismo homosexual de San Francisco, tanto para los que eran veteranos del ejército como para los que no. Lo cual nos remite de nuevo a las conclusiones de Bérubé sobre cómo la SMG influyó e inspiró a los miembros LGTB a ser más abiertos con respecto a su sexualidad y los alentó a empezar a construir sus propias comunidades.

3.4. El sexismo y el acoso laboral

Ciertamente las mujeres seleccionadas para aportar sus testimonios en el presente trabajo, si bien tuvieron experiencias en donde la discriminación estuvo muy presente como en el caso de Fanny, de Mabel, de Christine o de Charlotte, gran parte de ellas sino es que todas, fueron afortunadas al no enfrentarse al fantasma del sexismo que acompañó a tantas otras durante el tiempo que trabajaron en las fábricas o sirvieron en el ejército. Betty Cook no recuerda algún caso de acoso por parte de sus supervisores o sus compañeros de trabajo:

Alguien me preguntó, cuando di esa platica en el museo, acerca del acoso de los supervisores o de quien fuera, oh no, eso no era... mientras caminabas por las líneas para ir a tu línea de ensamblaje los chicos te silbaban, eras joven y bella pero eso no significaba nada, eso no era acoso.³¹¹

Sarah Craig, al igual que Betty, tampoco recuerda alguna mala experiencia laboral al lado de sus compañeros fuera en la fábrica o con los soldados que trabajaban al lado de su esposo, afirmando que el hecho de ser joven y con un hijo le había ayudado en este sentido.³¹²

Sin embargo, el sexismo existió en mayor grado en lo colectivo que en lo individual. Un ejemplo, fue la necesidad de recordarle constantemente a la mujer que ella ocupaba un

³¹⁰ *Ídem.*, p. 13-14. "I came out with the idea that going into the service would be good for everybody. You know, you had to live by the rules, you've got to do this and that and take care of yourself, we had to do everything for ourselves, nobody was helping us with anything and that was good. It was good training, you know, I thought it was good (...) Well, certainly you know that all the years there's always been many, many gay people in the service (...) Gay people could do the job just as good as anybody else, just because we're gay doesn't mean we can't do what we're supposed to do. You know..." T. A.

³¹¹ Entrevista a Betty Jane Esmoil Cook. *op. cit.*, p. 5. "someone asked me when I gave that talk at the museum about harassment from supervisors or anyone, oh, no, that wasn't... as you walked through lines to get to your assembly line the guys would whistle at you, you're young and pretty but that didn't mean anything, that was not harassment." T. A.

³¹² Entrevista a Sarah J. Davies Craig. *op. cit.*, p. 4.

lugar que tradicionalmente y por derecho le pertenecía al hombre. Como se ha mencionado anteriormente, la frase *For the duration...* [Mientras dure] que la mujer encontraba en la propaganda, en las revistas, en la radio o en los periódicos, pretendía hacerle ver que sus trabajos para la industria de guerra o sus servicios para el ejército no serían permanentes una vez que la guerra terminara, independientemente de que ellas quisieran o no continuar llevando a cabo ese tipo de trabajos o servicios. Y el sexismo existió también en forma de hostilidad y resentimiento, mismos que muchas mujeres encontraron sobre una base diaria. Por ejemplo, Mary Elizabeth Dorethy, quien se enlistó en las *WAVES*, recuerda la actitud de muchos de los marinos con los que tuvo que relacionarse durante su servicio:

Ya sabes, los hombres solían molestarnos cuando fuimos por primera vez aceptadas, y algunos de ellos no les gustaba porque, por supuesto, los estábamos reemplazando [...] en muchos casos, ellos decían “¿Cómo crees que vas a cargar esas enormes bolsas de correo?” Yo decía, “No vamos a cargarlas. Vamos a tirar de ellas”. Y yo decía que eso era lo que hacíamos, pero teníamos que probar nuestro valor. Y hacías más de lo que se esperaba de ti por esa razón, y, ya sabes, eso es muy... es muy difícil cuando estás compitiendo con hombres [...] Pero se dieron cuenta de que éramos muy débiles para esa clase de trabajo. Pero aun así lo hicimos, y las llevábamos a los camiones para que pudieran ponerlos a bordo del barco, ya sabes, llevarlos hasta el muelle. Así que eso fue... realmente fue una experiencia.³¹³

Particularmente las mujeres que se enlistaron en el ejército supieron algo acerca del sexismo. Según Jeanne Holm:³¹⁴ “en el mundo machista, el humor dentro del cuartel, la mujer y el sexo son un tema principal; las mujeres militares se convirtieron en una presa fácil.”³¹⁵ Esto propició una situación en la que la mujer, una vez que se unió a los cuerpos y reservas militares, fue considerada por su contraparte masculina no como una compañera de servicio ni tampoco como un elemento más que contribuía a la causa estadounidense en la guerra. Por el contrario fue vista como lo que hasta entonces había sido, es decir, el objeto

³¹³ Entrevista a Mary Elizabeth Dorethy. Transcripción no. 13. 10 p., p. 8-9. “You know, the men used to tease us when we first went in, and some of them didn't like it because, of course we were replacing them (...) in a lot of cases, and they said, “How do you think you're going to carry these great big mail bags?” I said, “We're not going to carry them. We're going to pull them.” And I said that's what we did, but we had to prove our worth. And you did more than was expected of you for that reason and, you know, it's very -- it's very difficult when you're competing with men (...) But they figured we were too weak to do that kind of a job. So we'd do that, and we'd cart them out to the trucks so they could put them aboard ship, you know, take them to the piers. So it was -- it really was an experience.” T. A.

³¹⁴ Jeanne Holm es una figura importante dentro del militarismo femenino estadounidense, ya que fue la primera mujer en alcanzar la posición de comandante de alto rango de una estrella. Su carrera militar se extiende desde la SGM cuando sirvió en la WAAC/WAC hasta los tiempos de la Guerra Fría. De su autoría son los estudios sobre la mujer y el militarismo estadounidense: *Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution* e *In Defense of a Nation: Servicewomen in World War II*.

³¹⁵ Renate Bridenthal. *op. cit.*, p.115-116. “In the machismo world of barracks humor, where women and sex are a primary topic, military women had become fair game.” T. A.

de burlas y comentarios que en muchas ocasiones rayaban en lo vulgar. Aunado a los peligros que representaba pertenecer al ejército, las mujeres reclutas también tuvieron que enfrentarse al rechazo no sólo de la sociedad sino de la comunidad militar por igual. De la misma forma en la que las mujeres que trabajaron como *Rosies* fueron ridiculizadas y se convirtieron en víctimas de la hostilidad, la mujer militar lo fue también. D'Ann Cambell, relata la historia de cómo para 1943, la moral de la mujer, en cualquiera de las ramas del ejército, sufrió un golpe del cual le costó trabajo recuperarse: una campaña de desprestigio hacia la mujer en uniforme esparció rumores de que en realidad se trataba de prostitutas o concubinas enviadas por el gobierno.³¹⁶

Esta clase de rumores y falsedades alimentaron las malinterpretaciones sobre el papel que en realidad jugaron las mujeres dentro del contexto militar estadounidense durante la SGM, además de que propició el aumento de la opinión masculina negativa sobre el aporte femenino a los cuerpos del ejército. Para el final de la guerra, las encuestas revelaban el parecer del hombre militar sobre el lugar de las mujeres:

Cuando se les preguntó si alguno aconsejaría a sus novias a unirse a la *WAC*, 64 por ciento definitivamente no lo haría, y 20 por ciento probablemente no lo haría. Casi la mitad de los soldados sentían que las mujeres podían hacer más por su país trabajando en la industria de guerra; sólo 18 por ciento pensaba que ellas podían hacer más en la *WAC*. Un tercio de los soldados sentía que era "bastante malo" para la reputación de una muchacha el ser una *WAC*; un quinto pensaba que era muy malo. Casi la mitad concluyó que la *WAC* no era lugar para que las mujeres estuvieran [ahí].³¹⁷

Sin embargo, Christine E. Long recuerda cómo las mujeres en el ejército, específicamente las *WAAC/WACs* a las que ella pertenecía, se las arreglaron para acallar esta clase de rumores e ideas erróneas sobre los papeles de la mujer militar a base de trabajo y dedicación: "Sí, bueno, muchos hombres tenían la idea equivocada, ellos pensaban... los pusimos en orden, los pusimos en orden verdaderamente rápido. Ellos pensaban, al principio pensaban que las mujeres estaban en el servicio para satisfacer a los oficiales, entonces pensaron que las mujeres estaban en el servicio para satisfacerlos."³¹⁸

³¹⁶ *Ídem.*, p. 115-116.

³¹⁷ *Ídem.*, p. 115-116. "When asked if they would advise their girlfriends to join the *WAC*, 64 percent definitely would not, and 20 percent probable would not. Almost half of the soldiers felt that women could do more for their country working in a war industry; only 18 percent thought they could do more in the *WAC*. One-third of the soldiers felt it was 'pretty bad' for a girl's reputation to be a *WAC*; one-fifth thought it was very bad. Almost half concluded that the *WAC* was no place for woman to be." T. A.

³¹⁸ Entrevista a Christine E. Long. *op. cit.*, p. 17. "Yeah, well, a lot of men had the wrong idea, they thought... we put them straight, we straight them up real fast. They thought, first they thought that women were in the service to satisfy the officers, then they thought that women were in the service to satisfy them." T. A.

Por otro lado, Violet Gordon, también miembro de las *WAAC/WAC*, recuerda que el hecho de aceptar mujeres en el ejército fue todo un acontecimiento que se reflejó particularmente en la forma en la que ella y su unidad fueron recibidas en su campo de entrenamiento:

Lo memorable de ese envío, ser enviadas a Fort Huachuca, fue realmente la llegada. Creo que nunca voy a olvidar eso. Mientras el tren de la tropa nos llevó a los límites del campo. Por supuesto, las unidades masculinas que ya estaban ahí sabían que íbamos. Había mucha controversia acerca de las mujeres en el Servicio, muchos rumores, la mayoría de ellos realmente no muy halagadores. La curiosidad, por supuesto impulsó a muchos de los hombres enlistados que estaban disponibles y libres para ver esta llegada; para salir y conocer a este llamado "Ejército de Mujeres". Fue un poco aterrador pues en cierto sentido estábamos como envueltas y rodeadas por todos estos hombres. Pero afortunadamente, el Ejército está usualmente preparado para la mayoría de las cosas, así que las unidades masculinas enlistadas no estaban ahí sin los oficiales que se aseguraron que se mantuviera algún tipo de decoro y orden.³¹⁹

Eventualmente, la mujer fue aceptada y tolerada en los entornos laborales de las fábricas o del ejército por sus compañeros. Al fin y al cabo, ambos sexos compartían un mismo trabajo, un mismo entorno laboral, una misma cotidianeidad y un mismo objetivo. La propaganda se encargó de mostrar imágenes donde el hombre y la mujer convivían y donde el hombre parecía validar y valorar la participación femenina en lugar de atacarla (Fig. 39). Sin embargo, era una aceptación obligada, una actitud más de condescendencia y sorpresa que una de verdadera convivencia. De acuerdo a D'Ann Campbell, esta actitud terminó por reflejar que la tensión entre los sexos permaneció latente porque para muchos hombres, como se ha mencionado con anterioridad, el hecho de que la mujer ocupara esa clase de trabajos o que fuera aceptada en el ejército representaba en general una amenaza tanto para él como hombre como para su hombría.³²⁰

³¹⁹ Entrevista a Violet Hill Gordon. *op. cit.*, p. 5-6. "The memorable thing about that dispatchment, being sent to Fort Huachuca, was really the arrival. I don't think I'll ever forget that. As the troop train took us to the boundaries of the camp. Of course, the male units that were already there knew that we were coming. There was a lot of controversy about women in the Service, a lot of rumors, most of them not really very complimentary. The curiosity, of course impelled as many of the enlisted men that were available and free to view this arrival; to come out and meet this so called "Women's Army". It was a little frightening in one sense that we were like engulfed and surrounded by all these men. But fortunately, the Army is usually prepared for most things, so the enlisted male units were not there without officers who made sure that some kind of decorum and order was maintained." T. A.

³²⁰ Renate Bridenthal. *op. cit.*, p. 115-116.



Fig. 39. Cartel de propaganda estadounidense, Packer. *Good Work, Sister*, 1944.

3.5. La mujer ante los accidentes y percances

Las mujeres, ya fuera en las fábricas o en las fuerzas del ejército, ¿estuvieron expuestas a alguna clase de peligros, de accidentes o resultaron con daños de la guerra?

La respuesta es afirmativa. En el caso de los trabajos en las fábricas y astilleros, resulta claro que este tipo de actividad no estaba exenta de riesgos a la integridad física de las y los trabajadores. Indudablemente existieron políticas y medidas de higiene y seguridad que se implementaron para mantener la salud, pero esto no evitó que en algún momento ocurrieran incidentes. Con algo tan simple como usar la indumentaria adecuada se podían evitar muchos accidentes. Sin embargo, en un principio para las mujeres no había atuendos hechos a su medida, menos aún se podía pensar que hubiera indumentarias que cumplieran sus funciones de protección sin dejar de ser elegantes, glamorosos y atractivos para la mujer. Los pantalones, por ejemplo, eran una moda que se había introducido en el gusto popular desde la década de los veinte pero no todas las mujeres los usaban abiertamente y en público porque aún se les consideraba ropas puramente masculinas. Por otra parte, los obreros habían introducido los pantalones y overoles a las fábricas porque ayudaban a la movilidad y resultaban más cómodos. En cambio, una prenda femenina que fue introducida a las fábricas por las mujeres fueron los pañuelos que usaban en la cabeza para evitar que el cabello se les enredara en los engranes de las máquinas perforadoras. Como lo recuerda

Betty Cook:

Oh, fue cuando podías empezar a usar pantalones en público [...] Sí y muchas mujeres llevaban overoles, yo tenía unos, es sólo que... porque yo tenía el cabello muy largo, en realidad nunca me lo corté, tenía trenzas y un moño y bandas pero yo usaba una careta muy grande así que no tenía que atarme la pañoleta o atar mi cabello hacia arriba.³²¹

Además, claro, del uso de accesorios como las caretas y máscaras que protegieran sus rostros, así como los sombreros y las gafas para los ojos (Fig. 40). Al respecto, Betty Jeanne Boggs comentaba:

Teníamos que llevar nuestro cabello de cierta manera. Tenían sombreros para nosotras. Tenía un ala en él por lo que en caso de que estuvieras cerca de la maquinaria, el ala golpearía primero la máquina y así te protegería. Luego si tenías el cabello largo, había esta cosa que solían llamar el *snood* [redecilla]; tenían esa red en la parte de atrás. Solía pensar que lucía tonta en eso y odiaba usarlo, pero pues ese es el punto de vista femenino. Y teníamos que usar ya fuera pantalones u overoles. Solíamos tener un traje de una sola pieza, también, que podías comprarle a la compañía.³²²



Fig. 40. Bernard Hoffma.
Una soldadora en un
patio de construcción de
barcos ajusta sus gafas
antes de resumir su
trabajo. Octubre, 1943.³²³

³²¹ Entrevista a Betty Jane Esmoil Cook. *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15. “Oh, this is when you could first start wearing pants out in public (...) Yeah and many of the women wore overalls, I had some, that’s just that... because I had very long hair, it never really been cut, I had braids and I had a bun and bands but I wore a very big face shield so I didn’t have to tie the bandana or tie my hair up.” T. A.

³²² Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 111. Betty Jeanne Boggs: “We had to wear our hair in a certain way. They had hats for us. It had a brim on it so in case you were near the machinery, the brim would hit the machine first and protect you. Then if you had long hair, it was this thing they used to call the *snood*; they had that net in the back. I used to think I looked dopey in that and I hated to wear it, but then that’s the female point of view. And we had to wear either pants or overalls. We used to have a one-piece suit, too, that you could buy from the company.” T. A.

³²³ *Vide:* <http://life.time.com/history/world-war-ii-classic-photos-from-the-20th-century-defining-conflict/#13> [Consulta 01/12/14].

La importancia del entrenamiento también era vital para evitar los accidentes. Las mujeres que eran contratadas en las fábricas y los astilleros generalmente eran previamente instruidas en el manejo de las máquinas, los taladros y las prensas, además de que contaban con la atenta supervisión de los instructores. Dorothy Jeannette Mobley recuerda su entrenamiento de seis semanas antes de entrar a trabajar a la Casper Air Base de la siguiente manera:

Bueno, tuvimos que aprender a hacer estas cosas y después teníamos seis semanas de entrenamiento en la escuela CNYA y luego teníamos que trabajar en la base aérea; teníamos que estar ahí como un trabajo, ya sabes. Eras escogida, ibas a trabajar, trabajabas ocho horas y luego ibas a casa. Y era trabajo por turnos. Trabajabas uno de tres turnos.³²⁴

Generalmente, así era como se manejaban los entrenamientos de estas mujeres: después de una contratación bastante rápida y sin rodeos, ésta era seguida de un tiempo determinado de entrenamiento en escuelas cercanas que habían sido adaptadas para la enseñanza del trabajo industrial. Al respecto Irene Robertson comenta lo siguiente: “Y después nos fuimos a -conseguir un trabajo en General Motors, construyendo los B-29s-. Ellos nos enviaron a una universidad que solía estar en Cleveland, en la Trigésima Calle, Universidad de Fenn. Nos enviaron ahí para la formación, y después nos pusimos a trabajar.”³²⁵ Meda Brendall, se enorgullecía de sus habilidades como soldadora, las cuales adquirió luego de un estricto entrenamiento:

Sí, bueno, cuando eres una soldadora tienes que tomar lecciones. Yo tuve que tomar lecciones durante seis semanas y luego tuve que tomar exámenes en cualquier tipo de metal que pudieras obtener y las diferentes, me refiero a que eran todas diferentes [...] tenías que aprender esas cosas y después de que yo aprendí, yo estaba, digamos... se nos permitió estar en los talleres donde se fabricaban las pipas de los barcos; así que fui ahí y el lugar era muy grande al igual que mi tablero era eléctrico y cada vez que presionabas el botón [del tablero] yo empezaba y me encantó, me gustó cada parte de ello. Tenías que enseñarte a ti y a las personas a tu alrededor disciplina.³²⁶

³²⁴ Entrevista a Dorothy Jeannette Mobley. *op. cit.*, p. 4. “Well, we had to just learn how to do these things and then after we'd had six weeks of training at the CNYA School and then we had to work at the air base; we had to be there just like a job, you know. You were picked up, you went to work, you worked eight hours and then you went home. And it was shift work. You worked one of the three shifts.” T. A.

³²⁵ Entrevista a Irene B. Norton Robertson. *op. cit.*, p. 2. “And then we went to -- got a job at General Motors, building the B-29s. They sent us to a college used to be in Cleveland on Thirtieth Street, Fenn College. They sent us there for training, and then we went to work.” T. A.

³²⁶ Entrevista a Meda Montana Hallyburton Brennan. *op. cit.*, p. 3. “Yeah, well, when you are a welder you have to take lessons, I had to take lessons for six weeks and then I had to take exams on every type of metal that you can get and the different, say that they were all different (...) you had to learn those things and after I learned I was, let's say... we were allowed to be in the pipe shops so I went over there and the place was larger as this and my table was electrical and every time you hit strike, it's from the table so I started there and I loved it, I liked every bit of it. You had to teach yourself discipline and the people around you.” T. A.

Además del entrenamiento de las trabajadoras, existió el caso de varios grupos de jóvenes, entre diecinueve y veinte años, recién ingresadas a la universidad en carreras relacionadas a la ingeniería y las matemáticas, que fueron contactadas por algunas fábricas de producción bélica para que aportaran sus conocimientos a la construcción de aeronaves, barcos o tanques. Esto significó una oportunidad sin precedentes para ellas, en la que podían aprender y enseñar al mismo tiempo. La revista *Life* las llamó “Engeneering Cadets” [Cadetes de ingeniería] en un artículo que publicó el 10 de mayo de 1943. En él se ilustra particularmente el proceso de selección que la fábrica Curtis-Wright Corporation llevó a cabo en varias universidades de los estados de Iowa, Texas, Minnesota y Pennsylvania. Las jóvenes elegidas por esta empresa recibían un entrenamiento que duraba aproximadamente unos diez meses para luego trabajar y recibir como paga “\$10 a la semana mientras dure el curso de entrenamiento, pueden esperar [luego] trabajos que oscilan entre los \$130 a los \$150 mensuales [...] su pionera incursión en un campo que anteriormente era ‘únicamente para hombres’ les da una participación activa en la lucha.”³²⁷

El carácter no combativo de las fuerzas, cuerpos y reservas femeninos del ejército no significó que muchas de sus reclutas no resultaran heridas o muertas en el cumplimiento del deber a causa de accidentes durante los entrenamientos, a enfermedades o a las bajas que sucedieron durante los viajes que algunas mujeres llevaron a cabo en barcos o aviones cuando eran alcanzados por fuego enemigo. Un total de aproximadamente 400 mujeres enlistadas en el ejército perdieron la vida. Las principales causas para estas bajas fueron accidentes aéreos y marítimos, así como bombardeos a hospitales.

Por ejemplo, la reserva de las *WASPs* supo algo acerca de las bajas por accidentes ya que debido a las actividades como pilotos de prueba o de reconocimiento, estas mujeres ciertamente llevaron a cabo una labor bastante riesgosa, exponiéndose a los peligros que representaba el volar aviones que en muchas ocasiones eran de prototipo. En total, 38 de sus reclutas fallecieron durante los vuelos que llevaron a cabo como parte de su aportación a la guerra. Annelle Bulecheck y Mildred Axton tuvieron experiencias que a una la acercó al peligro mientras volaba y a la otra la llevó a reparar en realidad en qué tal peligroso era el trabajo para el que se había alistado. Annelle recuerda lo siguiente:

³²⁷ “Engineering cadets. Girls train for aircraft industry”. En: *Life*. Vol. 14. Mayo 10, 1943., p. 45. “get \$10 a week during the training course, may look forward to jobs ranging from \$130 to \$150 monthly [...] their pioneering expedition into a field formerly ‘for men only’ gives them an active share in the fight”. T. A. Vide: <http://books.google.com.mx/books?id=5k0EAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> [Consulta 16/09/14]

Yo tuve una, una falla en el fluido hidráulico justo afuera de Phoenix, Luke Field, y eso, la línea del sistema hidráulico se rompió, todavía mecánica, y escupió fluido hidráulico sobre mí y sobre la cabina, me refiero a las gafas [que portaba sobre mí] y al parabrisas, por lo que tuve que hacer un aterrizaje de emergencia en Luke Field y nos fuimos en algunos de sus aviones - oh, eso fue divertido, tuve un gran fin de semana. El resto de las chicas lo logró, ya sabes. Bueno, Betty Stein murió- un rayo, no saben si fue un rayo o un relámpago- pero ella voló hacia un lado de una montaña.³²⁸

Por otro lado, Mildred relata la siguiente anécdota:

De todos los aviones que transportábamos, sólo dos de nosotras [tuvieron accidentes y] murieron porque algo estaba mal con ese avión y una de ellas era mi mejor amiga [...] una mujer, su avión fue obstruido y golpeó la mayoría del sistema que la ayudaba a volar el avión pero ella lo trajo de vuelta justo en el lugar exacto y ella lo trajo de vuelta, la vi cuando estaba fuera de control, lo vi y cuando ella aterrizó de vuelta en la base, estaba tan orgullosa de ella que sólo lloré.³²⁹

Sin embargo, las mujeres pertenecientes a otros cuerpos del ejército también sufrieron bajas o se enfrentaron a peligros propios de un contexto bélico. Eva Romero se encontraba muy cerca de la línea de fuego durante su estancia de servicio en Nueva Guinea y recuerda haber escuchado los disparos y las detonaciones de las batallas que libraron sus compatriotas contra los japoneses. También, recuerda cómo la suerte estuvo de su lado en una ocasión muy particular:

Una vez me apunté para un vuelo nocturno que sólo iba a supervisar las selvas de Nueva Guinea, así que me ofrecí para él pero estaba en servicio esa noche así que no fui y el avión se estrelló en la selva y tomó cuarenta y dos días encontrarlo y hubo tres sobrevivientes, una chica y dos chicos sobrevivieron y estuvieron rondando por la selva, comiendo lo que pudieran encontrar por cuarenta y dos días y cuando regresaron, esta joven, ella era tan hermosa, se parecía a Gene Tierney, no sé si la conozcas, era una hermosa estrella de cine, tenía una hermosa piel y un hermoso cabello, siempre lo mantuvo muy bien... y ella regresó y estaba tan oscura como chocolate negro, ya sabes y su piel, pobre cosa y su cabello estaba largo, ella tenía que ponerlo muy esmeradamente, muy arreglado y cuando ella regresó estaba todo, uno de los chicos tenía un cuchillo en su bolsillo y él tuvo que cortarte el cabello porque se le enredó en la selva, ya sabes, mientras caminaba a través de ella por lo que lucía horrible, me sentí terrible, tuvieron una muy mala experiencia.³³⁰

³²⁸ Entrevista a Annelle H. Henderson Bulecheck. Transcripción no. 14. 24 p., p. 12. "I had a, a hydraulic fluid failure right outside of Phoenix, Luke Field, and it, the hydraulic system line broke, still mechanics, and spewed hydraulic fluid all over me and the cockpit, I mean the glasses and me and the windshield, so I had an emergency landing at Luke Field and checked out in some of their planes - oh, that was fun, I had a ball that weekend. The rest of the girls made it in, you know. Well, Betty Stein was killed - bolt, they don't know whether a bolt of lightning - but she flew into the side of a mountain." T. A.

³²⁹ Entrevista a Mildred Darlene Tuttle Axton. *op. cit.*, p. 9, 15 "Of all the planes that we ferried, only two of us were killed because something was wrong with that airplane and one of them was my best friend [...] one woman, her plane was shut up and knocked out most of her system that helped her fly the plane but she brought it back on just to the basic place that she had and she brought it back, I saw her when she was out of control, I watched it and she landed it back in the base, I was so proud of her I just cried." T. A.

³³⁰ Entrevista a Eva Romero Jacques. *op. cit.*, p. 8-9. "At one time I signed for an air flight that was just going oversee the New Guinea jungles and so I signed out for it but I was on duty that night so I didn't go and the

Además de los peligros durante los entrenamientos o las muertes por accidentes en la línea del deber, las mujeres dentro del ejército particularmente se enfrentaron a la desigualdad de circunstancias entre ellas y sus compañeros del género masculino. La desigualdad se reflejó en los beneficios que tenían las mujeres pertenecientes al ejército comparados con los de los hombres. Las mujeres miliares no recibían la misma paga que la de sus similares varones; se les pagaba mucho menos por el mismo trabajo y aún a pesar de tener el mismo rango. Igualmente, no recibieron beneficios continuos de veterano como el seguro de vida, la cobertura médica y los beneficios por fallecimiento. En muchos casos, incluso, se les negó el estatus de “veterana”. Esto, y entre otros aspectos que marcaron la desigualdad entre las mujeres y los hombres dentro del ejército, reflejan lo que D’Ann Campbell afirmaba sobre la mujer en el ámbito militar. Esto es, que el servicio militar que prestaron las mujeres durante la SGM resultó por lo general una experiencia gratificante para la mujer en términos individuales. Pero colectivamente, para las mujeres ya en interacción con los hombres, significó un completo desastre. La razón de Campbell para esta situación es que:

Las mujeres dominaron el lenguaje y las costumbres militares, prosperaron en la marcha, aceptaron la disciplina, sobresalieron en sus trabajos y disfrutaron de la experiencia, todo para el asombro de los líderes militares quienes tenían visiones estereotipadas de lo que los hombres y las mujeres podían y no podían hacer. Aunque la tropa masculina podía nombrar los nombres de las mujeres con quienes trabajaban y las respetaban, y los oficiales masculinos podían puntualizar con orgullo los logros de sus mujeres, muchos de estos hombres aún creían que las mujeres no pertenecían a las fuerzas armadas. Vestir a las mujeres con uniforme fue simplemente un paso muy radical para la mayoría de los americanos. Un puñado de años en guerra no podía borrar profundamente las normas y los estereotipos tan arraigados.³³¹

plane crashed in the jungle and it took forty two days to find it and there were three survivors, one girl and two boys survived and they were walking around the jungle, eating whatever they could find for forty two days and when they came back, this young lady, she was so beautiful, she was like Gene Tierney, I don’t know if you knew her, she as a beautiful movie star, she had a beautiful complexion and hair, she always kept it so nicely... and she came back and she was as dark as she could be like chocolate black, you know and her skin, poor thing and her hair was long, she had to put it very neatly, very arranged and when she came back it was all, one of the guys had a knife in his pocket and he had to cut her hair off because it got tangled in the jungle, you know, while walking through so she looked awful, I felt so badly about, they had a really bad experience.” T. A.

³³¹ Renate Bridenthal. *op. cit.*, p. 118. “Women mastered military language and customs, thrived at marching, accepted the discipline, excelled at their jobs, and enjoyed the experience, all to the amazement of military leaders who had stereotyped visions of what men and women could and could not do. Even though the male rank and file could rattle off the names of women they worked with and respected, and male officers could point with pride to the accomplishment of their women, most of these men still believed that women did not belong to the armed forces. Putting women in uniform was simply too radical a step for most Americans. A handful of war years could not erase deeply ingrained norms and stereotypes.” T. A.

3.6. La mujer y la experiencia de la guerra

A pesar de los peligros y adversidades, es importante advertir que estas mujeres, con todos los años que las separan hoy de sus experiencias durante la guerra, siguen considerando relevante el papel que jugaron en el curso de ella. A pesar de que cada una vivió la guerra de forma distinta, de las diecinueve mujeres seleccionadas del *Veterans History Project* y las cinco mujeres cuyos testimonios se recogieron del libro *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, todas y cada una de ellas, mencionan en algún momento, el sentido valioso y trascendente que tuvo su papel desempeñado para la causa en la guerra. Junto al sentimiento de compromiso de ellas con su nación, el cual en muchos casos fue remunerado, también estuvo presente la sensación de que la guerra, con todo y los sacrificios que trajo consigo, con las pérdidas y las añoranzas, resultó un punto de quiebre y un momento sin igual dentro de la historia que cambió para siempre la forma en la que la mujer fue representada dentro de la sociedad estadounidense. Sarah Craig, quien recordemos trabajó como *Rosie* produciendo bombardeos Boeing, al ser cuestionada sobre cómo resumiría su participación en la SGM en términos de los cambios que trajo para ella como mujer, responde de la siguiente manera:

Bueno, creo que las mujeres que trabajaron durante la guerra, creo que tuvieron, les gustaba la idea de trabajar y tener algo de dinero y decidieron, bueno, después de la guerra [que] podías continuar trabajando, así es como yo me sentí de cualquier modo [...] Sí, pensé que estaba contribuyendo a la guerra, porque todos los hombres se habían ido a la guerra y eso, durante la guerra muchos hombres dejaron el trabajo y por eso nosotras tuvimos que hacerlo.³³²

La experiencia, por ejemplo, de Betty Jeanne Boggs en la guerra parece ser la de una jovencita despreocupada que pareció encontrar nuevas oportunidades por mera casualidad, sin buscarlas en realidad y que, aparentemente, simplemente dejó que las cosas se dieran por sí solas. Sin embargo, Betty recuerda:

Me sentí como contenta de haberlo hecho, de que había hecho mi parte. Trabajé en una planta de guerra y esa fue una de las cosas que hacías cuando tu país estaba en guerra, y fue una experiencia que disfruté. Aún hoy, estoy muy orgullosa de ese trabajo. Siempre podré decir: “Oye, fui una remachadora durante la SGM”.³³³

³³² Entrevista a Sarah J. Davies Craig. *op. cit.*, p. 4-5. “Well, I think that the women that worked during the war, I think they got, they liked the idea of working and have some money also and they decided, well, after the war is over you’ll just continue working, that’s the way I felt anyway [...] Yeah, I thought I was contributing to the war, ‘cus the men were all gone to war and that’s, during that war many men left the work so we had to do it.” T. A.

³³³ Sherna Berger Gluck. *op. cit.*, p. 113. “But I felt like I was glad I did it, that I’d done my part. I worked in a war plant and it was one of the things you did when your country was at war, and it had been an enjoyable experience. Even today, I’m very proud of that job. I can always say, ‘Hey, I was a riveter during WW2’.” T. A.

Ciertamente un gran número de hombres y mujeres que vivieron la guerra durante su juventud y que prestaron servicios para la causa eran hijos de la Gran Depresión. Muchos nacieron antes o durante los primeros años de la crisis económica y crecieron sufriendo sus consecuencias y viviendo dentro de una sociedad y núcleos familiares afectados por las carencias que los afectaron directa o indirectamente. La guerra, paradójicamente, vino a significar un sinnúmero de nuevas oportunidades porque trajo consigo una ampliación del horizonte laboral, educativo o social (Ver Gráfica 9). Eva Romero comenta al respecto:

Creo que mi vida no hubiera estado completa si yo no hubiera estado dentro del ejército, creo que me hubiera perdido una de las más grandes experiencias de mi vida porque creo que puedo... ya sabes, tengo una impresión diferente de la juventud, quiero que estén protegidos, odio verlos ir a la guerra, ya sabes, y creo que la educación, si tienen una buena educación tendrán todas las oportunidades hoy en día para hacerlo bien por ellos mismos, nosotros no lo hicimos en la Depresión, casi nadie fue capaz de permitirse ir a ninguna Universidad y nosotros trabajamos por 50 centavos la hora, cuando yo estaba en la Universidad y trabajé para salir adelante y eso fue difícil pero aún es difícil, costoso en estos días.³³⁴

La guerra también significó para muchas mujeres el poder relacionarse mejor con la gente a su alrededor, en una especie de sentimiento común de cooperación y apoyo, como lo comenta Helen Brown:

Tenías que asociarte con las personas, y tenías que trabajar con la gente todos los días, y eso era agradable. Te enterabas de quién hacía su trabajo y quién no, y tuvimos muchos, muchos jóvenes maestros y personas que estaban en la Universidad, pero ellos venían a trabajar para conseguir dinero para ir a la Universidad. Así que eso era, era... sí, fue muy remunerador [...] Creo que con todos los sacrificios que hicimos durante todos esos años tiene realmente, fue realmente remunerador para nosotros porque tenías que usar tu fe. Vivías con fe, sola, casi, porque eso era todo lo que teníamos.³³⁵

O el hecho de poder aportar algo a la causa, por más pequeño que éste fuera cobraba otras dimensiones como fue el caso de Mary Doyle Keefe. Ella trabajó en una pequeña compañía de teléfonos, ya que nunca ingresó al ejército ni a las fábricas o a los astilleros. Sin embargo, el sentimiento de compromiso hacia la causa, Mary lo vivió de forma profunda:

³³⁴ Entrevista a Eva Romero Jacques. *op. cit.*, p. 9. "I think my live wouldn't have been complete if I hadn't been in the military, I think I would miss out one of the biggest experiences of my life because I think I can... you know, I had a different impression of youth, I want them to be protected, I hate to see them go to war, you know, and I think that the education, if they get a good education they'll all have opportunities nowadays to do well for themselves, we didn't do in the Depression, hardly anyone was able to afford going to any College and we worked for 50 cents an hour, when I was on to College and I worked my way through and it was tough but it's still tough, expensive nowadays." T. A.

³³⁵ Entrevista a Helen R. Brown. *op. cit.*, p. 7. "You had to associate with people, and you had to work with people every day, and that was nice. You found out who would work and who wouldn't work, and we had lots of, lots of young teachers and people that were in college, but they came to work to get money to go to college on. So that was, it was, yeah, it was very rewarding [...] I think, though, with the sacrifices we made in those years has really, was really rewarding for us because you had to use your faith. You lived with faith, alone, almost, because that's all we had." T. A.

Bueno, en ese entonces hacíamos, nosotras, las mujeres sentíamos que estábamos tratando de hacer cosas por las personas... nosotras hicimos de comer y donábamos sangre y cosas así... nosotras sentíamos que debíamos ayudar.³³⁶

Significó también, caer en cuenta de que había oportunidades y otro tipo de actividades fuera del hogar, lejos de los tradicionales papeles que hasta entonces habían desempeñado. Papeles que no implicaban la deshonra social porque al fin y al cabo significaban trabajo, el cual podía ayudarlas tanto a ellas mismas como a sus familias. Betty Cook comenta al respecto:

Sí, sí, le dio [a las mujeres] la confianza de que, "Bueno, sí, puedo hacer otras cosas además del cuidado del hogar", sí, o, si ellas... estoy hablando de las mujeres que no tenían antecedentes secretariales o de enfermeras, ellas tenían su carrera pero esto es sólo la mujer promedio que estaba casada o soltera [...] Yo sólo fui parte de las mujeres que querían tener un trabajo para ayudar a ganar esta guerra, darles estas máquinas [a los hombres] y lo que ellos necesitaran.³³⁷

Y también, en el caso de mujeres como Leonora Whildin, quien le debió mucha de su educación como mujer firme y de carácter a sus padres de origen italiano, pues le significó repensar el papel que la mujer ocupaba dentro de la sociedad, independientemente del contexto que fuera. Cuando se le preguntó si los trabajos que había desempeñado durante la guerra (primero en una fábrica de interruptores y después enlistándose en las *Cadet Nurse Corps*) habían cambiado sus sentimientos respecto a la naturaleza del trabajo de la mujer y de lo que podían o no podían, y lo que debían o no debían llevar a cabo en el ámbito laboral, Leonora respondió:

Oh, claro que lo hizo. Probablemente yo soy una de las pocas que tuvieron una madre trabajadora que no era una profesionalista, pero ella, al haber tenido cuatro hijas, decía, "Tienes que aprender a hacer algo, porque ya no puedes depender de un hombre". Y claro que todas nosotras sabemos que el Príncipe Azul es un cuento de hadas, y la mayoría de los hombres aceptó el cambio, porque le quitó todo el peso.³³⁸

³³⁶ Entrevista a Mary Doyle Keefe. *op. cit.*, p. 2. "Well, at that time we did, we, the women felt that they were trying to do things for the people... we did eating and sent blood over and stuff like that... we felt that we should help." T. A.

³³⁷ Entrevista a Betty Jane Esmoil Cook. *op. cit.*, p. 5, 13. "Yeah, yes, it gave them a confidence that, 'Well, yes, I could do other things outside of keep house', yeah, or, if they... I'm talking about the women who did not have a secretarial background or a nurse, they had their career but this is just the average woman that was married or single [...] I was just part of the women who wanted so badly to have a job to help win this war, get these machines to them and what they need." T. A.

³³⁸ Entrevista a Leonora Porreca Whildin. *op. cit.*, p. 24. "Oh, indeed it did. I'm probably one of the few who had a working mother that wasn't a professional woman, but she, having four daughters, said, "You have to learn to do something, because you can't depend on a man anymore." And of course we all know that Prince Charming is a fairy story, and most men should welcome the change, because it takes the total burden off of them." T. A.

Para la mujer militar, la experiencia bélica le brindó un sentido del deber, del compromiso y de la entrega muy particular, un tanto diferente al de la mujer que trabajó en las fábricas de la industria bélica. En el caso de las mujeres piloto de la *WASP*, (Fig. 41) el poder brindar sus conocimientos y habilidades, significó poder abrir el campo para las futuras generaciones. Mildred Darlene asegura con firmeza y orgullo:

Fuimos pioneras [...] ahora todas las mujeres están volando todos los aviones en los aeropuertos e incluso están volando como una tripulación en un avión cisterna y un técnico de reabastecimiento.³³⁹



Fig. 41. Pilot of the U.S. Women's Air Force Service. Peter Stackpole, 1943.

Muchas de estas mujeres no se cegaban ante las injusticias y las problemáticas sociales antes mencionadas. El sentido del deber y el orgullo que les provocaba poder servir de alguna u otra forma a su país en medio de un momento de crisis como lo fue la SGM estaban muy presentes de la misma forma que la conciencia que desarrollaron en torno a los sacrificios que hicieron ellas mismas, así como los de sus compañeras y compañeros. Este caso se dio especialmente entre las mujeres militares, para quienes usar un uniforme del ejército se convirtió en un verdadero honor. June E. Betz, que se enlistó con las *SPARS* de la

³³⁹ Entrevista a Mildred Darlene Tuttle Axton. *op. cit.*, p. 14. "We were pioneers [...] now all the women are flying all the airplanes in the airports and they're even flying as a whole crew in a tanker and a boom operator." T. A.

Guardia Costera resumió esta idea al ser cuestionada sobre la instalación de un monumento para conmemorar la SGM en la capital estadounidense:

Bueno, eso reconoce a otras personas que no sean militares también. Y las personas en el *home front* que sacrificaron mucho y que verdaderamente trabajaron juntas. No es como la forma en que las personas es -son ahora, hay mucho- tantas personas en contra de la guerra. Y yo lo sabía -yo pensé hace años si [que si] hubiera otra guerra, nunca habría una cooperación como la hubo durante la SGM. Las amas de casa fueron ahorrando su grasa para donarla para propósitos militares. No recuerdo ahora para qué la necesitaban. Y ellas aceptaron el racionamiento, y muchas mujeres fueron a trabajar en las fábricas. Probablemente has oído hablar de que *Rosie the Riveter* salió de eso [...] Me alegra haber tenido la experiencia de estar en el ejército y sentir que estaba contribuyendo al esfuerzo de guerra. Oh, y una cosa que mencionaste acerca de ser menospreciadas, cuando le dije a mi ministro que me había enlistado, él me dijo, "No tú, June", como si fuera la cosa más horrible que podía hacer. Pero cuando llevaba un uniforme, me comporté mucho mejor que... quiero decir, adicionalmente mejor, cuidando lo que hacía porque no quería deshonrar el uniforme.³⁴⁰

Sin embargo, hay testimonios de muertes que evocan un sentimiento de impotencia ante las injusticias que muchas de estas mujeres experimentaron directamente. Por ejemplo, Annelle Bulecheck recuerda las treinta y ocho compañeras piloto fallecidas con sentimiento y tristeza pero también con cierta amargura, provocada por el prejuicio que se tenía hacia ellas por ser mujeres piloto:

No, pero yo quiero hablar sobre las muertes. Tuvimos treinta y ocho muertes, y, eso fue equivalente a, creo, un poco menos que las de los hombres que habían estado haciendo los mismos trabajos. Y, nuestro raro, raro estatus de no ser ni chicha ni limonada, cuando una de las chicas moría, los padres tenían que mandar por los cuerpos o nosotras hacíamos una colecta para enviar los restos a su casa. No había bandera en la tumba, no había una estrella dorada que colgar en la ventana,³⁴¹ no había 10,000 dólares en pólizas de seguros, sólo nos habíamos ido. Y, la injusticia de ello no nos molestaba porque no conocíamos nada mejor. Pensábamos que hacíamos un gran trabajo, lo cual hicimos, y sólo fuimos adelante y lo hicimos.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Entrevista a June E. Betz. Transcripción no. 11. 16 p., p. 12-13, 15. "Well, it recognizes people other than the military people, too. And the people on the *home front* sacrificed a lot and they really worked together. It isn't like the way people are -- is now, there's so much -- so many people against the war. And I knew -- I thought years ago if there would be another war, there never would be a cooperation like there was during World War II. The housewives were saving their grease to donate for military purposes. I can't remember now what they needed that for. And they accepted rationing, and a lot of women went to work in the factories. You probably heard of Rosie the Riveter that came out of that [...] I'm glad that I had the experience of being in the military and felt that I was contributing to the war effort. Oh, one thing you mentioned about being looked down upon, when I told my minister that I had enlisted, he said, 'Not you, June', as if that was the most awful thing I could do. But when I was wearing a uniform, I behaved much better than -- I mean, extra better watching what I did because I didn't want to disgrace the uniform." T. A.

³⁴¹ Era costumbre de las familias estadounidenses colocar un pequeño banderín con una o varias estrellas azules que indicaba el número de integrantes de la familia que se encontraban sirviendo en el ejército. Una vez que morían en cumplimiento del deber, la estrella azul era sustituida por una dorada.

³⁴² Entrevista a Annelle H. Henderson Bulecheck. *op. cit.*, p. 11. "No, but I do want to talk about the deaths. We had thirty-eight deaths, and, that was equivalent to, I think, a little less than the men that had been doing these same jobs. And, our funny, funny status of being neither fish nor fowl, when one of the girls were killed, the parents either had to send for the bodies or we girls would take up a collection and send the body home. There

Por otro lado, Leonora Whildin recuerda cómo los salarios que recibió como miembro de las *Cadet Nurse Corps* no correspondían a los salarios que le prometieron cuando en el momento en el que se alistó:

Bueno, déjame decirte, mi salario, no era lo que las Rosies the Riveters recibían, pero creo que la influencia política tuvo mucho que ver con los pagos, incluso a través del gobierno federal, porque en ese volante que te di, los salarios que mencionaban para las cadet nurses no coincidían con lo que yo recibí. Yo diría que recibí alrededor de 30 dólares a la semana, lo cual para mí era mucho dinero en ese entonces. De eso, le daba a mi madre 15 dólares, porque teníamos renta que pagar. No había nadie más en la casa. Y cuando ingresé a la enfermería, ella tuvo que renunciar a eso. Y con el resto yo tenía para el pasaje, para el almuerzo, y ropa.³⁴³

Para los últimos meses de la guerra, los trabajos en las fábricas y los astilleros particularmente empezaron a disminuir ya que la victoria se sentía próxima y se respiraba en el aire gracias a las buenas noticias que se recibían de los frentes de batalla y que culminaron con las victorias en Europa y en Japón. Para ese entonces, el número de mujeres en la fuerza de trabajo era mayor al 50 por ciento de lo que se registró en 1940, por lo que la mujer constituyó el “57% de todas las personas empleadas fuera del ejército, y 80% de todas las mujeres en la fuerza de trabajo [que] deseaban continuar trabajando después de que la guerra terminara.”³⁴⁴ Sin embargo, estas cifras no reflejan con exactitud la realidad de las cerca de 4 millones de mujeres que fueron despedidas de sus trabajos sin importar si deseaban o no continuar en ellos. Por voluntad propia o no, las mujeres estadounidenses comenzaron a abandonar aquellos trabajos de los que se habían apropiado y a los que se habían acoplado, tal y como se esperaba que lo hicieran. Y de la misma forma en la que los trabajos en la industria bélica fueron disminuyendo poco a poco, las imágenes propagandísticas favorables y positivas de la mujer llevándolos a cabo lo hicieron también. Nuevamente, se repitieron los patrones de los años inmediatos a la PGM, cuando la mujer, en primera instancia fue representada favorablemente laborando en novedosos trabajos para su género. En segunda instancia al encontrar cierta liberación personal y social durante

was no flag on the grave, there was no gold star to hang in the window, there was no 10,000 dollar insurance policies, we were just gone. And, the unfairness of it didn't bother us because we didn't know any better. We thought we were doing a great job, which we did, and we just went ahead and did it.” T. A.

³⁴³ Entrevista a Leonora Porreca Whildin. *op. cit.*, p. 9. “Well, let me tell you, my salary, it wasn't what the Rosie the Riveter's got, but I kind of think political clout has a lot to do with pays, even though the federal government, because on that flyer I gave you, the salaries they mentioned for cadet nurses didn't match what I got. I would say I'd get about 30 dollars a week, which to me was a lot of money then. Of that, I would give my mother 15 dollars, because we had rent to pay. There was no one else in the house. And when I went to nursing, she had to give that up. And with the rest I had carfare, lunch money, and clothes.” T. A.

³⁴⁴ George H. Roeder. *op. cit.*, p. 48. “57% of all employed persons outside the military, and 80% of all women in the work force wished to continue working after the war ended.” T. A.

la década de los años veinte. En tercera instancia cuando a mediados de la década de los treinta y hasta el inicio de la SGM se buscó que la mujer retomara sus “verdaderas” funciones sociales (madre, esposa o ama de casa) En cuarta instancia, cuando no sólo rompió nuevamente con estos estereotipos aventurándose en la fuerza de trabajo pesado sino que logró equilibrarlos con su vida personal, con esas “verdaderas” ocupaciones femeninas. Al final de la guerra, se retornó al principio del ciclo: ese momento extraordinario en la historia había pasado ya, por lo tanto la mujer y su representación debían volver a lo que se consideraba era su lugar “natural”. Las imágenes de la mujer trabajadora comenzaban a ser sustituidas sutilmente por las de la mujer oficinista, las de la mujer militar por las de la mujer en el entorno hogareño: “claramente las mujeres trabajadoras de producción estaban siendo reemplazadas no en la vida real pero ciertamente en la conciencia del público. Se estaban haciendo preparaciones para el mundo de la posguerra.”³⁴⁵

Pero, ¿qué hay de las imágenes propagandísticas?, ¿en verdad resultaron una influencia significativa en la decisión de estas mujeres de entrar a trabajar en la industria bélica y de animarse a alistarse y servir en el ejército? En este ámbito, Loenora Whildin recordaba que:

Sí. Bueno, tenían carteles por todos lados. Creo que vi uno de las *Cadet Nurse Corps* en una oficina postal. Tenían en la radio. Claro que no teníamos televisión en ese entonces, pero las noticias en las películas, los cortes, tenían algunos reclutamientos.³⁴⁶

Para los intereses de investigación, la respuesta es afirmativa. ¿Qué nos dicen los veinticuatro testimonios respecto al papel de la propaganda durante la SGM si “la tarea primordial de la propaganda y la publicidad durante la guerra fue crear una especie de participación y compromiso muy personal con respecto a la guerra”?³⁴⁷ Si bien no a todas las mujeres elegidas se les pregunta directa y específicamente sobre las imágenes propagandísticas, a las que sí se les formula esta clase de pregunta, responden identificando, y en varios casos, identificándose ellas mismas con una vieja conocida: “Rosie the Riveter”. De las once mujeres que trabajaron en las fábricas y astilleros, nueve de ellas se identifican a sí mismas como *Rosies*,³⁴⁸ no como una simple trabajadora de industria

³⁴⁵ Sherna Berger Gluck., *op. cit.*, p. 15. “Clearly women production workers were being phased out-if not yet in actuality, then certainly in the public consciousness. Preparations were being made for the postwar world.” T. A.

³⁴⁶ Entrevista a Leonora Porreca Whildin. *op. cit.*, p. 5. “Yes. Well, they had posters all over the place. I think I saw the Cadet Nurse Corps one in a post office. They had on radio. Of course we didn't have television at that time, but the newsreels in the movies, the cuts, would have some recruitments.” T. A.

³⁴⁷ George H. Roeder. *op. cit.* p. 60.

³⁴⁸ *Vide*: Transcripción 1, p. 7. Transcripción 3, p. 3. Transcripción 8, p. 2. Transcripción 15, p. 2. además de los

pesada ni como remachadora o soldadora, sino como *Rosie*. Sin embargo, para Meda Brendall, el hecho de que la identificaran con la imagen de *Rosie* no era algo de importancia ni de significado, es decir, su trabajo era el que la hacía sentirse orgullosa, no el que la identificaran como un ícono. “Yo decía, ‘No me llames Rosie the Riveter, yo no soy Rosie The Riveter’, todos los respetos para su trabajo, [pero] yo trabajé muy duro como para que me llamaran Rosie the Riveter.”³⁴⁹ Considero que esto demuestra la influencia que esta representación propagandística en particular tuvo en el imaginario y la decisión de estas mujeres de entrar a trabajar para apoyar la causa bélica. “Rosie the Riveter” se introdujo dentro del imaginario individual y colectivo de la sociedad estadounidense. Las mujeres se identificaron con ella y las personas de su entorno también las reconocían como tal. Por ello la reacción de Meda y el hecho de que a esas mujeres cuyo testimonio se recogió en esta investigación, en el momento de sus entrevistas, se les llamara *Rosie* en lugar de “trabajadora de fábrica” demuestra el alcance que esta imagen tuvo y tiene en el imaginario estadounidense.

A lo largo del presente capítulo se buscó dar cuenta de la forma en la que la mujer estadounidense se consideró llamada al esfuerzo de guerra, así como la forma en que ella percibió y se apropió de la propaganda que le estaba dirigida. Para ello se buscó dar un panorama de las experiencias personales durante la SGM, poniendo especial énfasis en aquellos aspectos que la propaganda ignoraba y que no representaba. Ciertamente, la experiencia bélica fue diferente para cada mujer. Desde luego muchos estudios serios que dan cuenta de estas experiencias utilizan cifras generales que, obviamente, son de gran importancia para quien se interesa por el estudio de la mujer durante la SGM. Sin embargo, lo que se buscó en este apartado fue que estas cifras y estos datos duros, al cotejarlos y enfrentarlos con las experiencias recopiladas en los testimonios, nos ofrecieran un pequeño pero importante acercamiento a las diferentes experiencias bélicas de al menos veinticuatro mujeres. Una cifra diminuta frente al total de mujeres que sirvieron en el ejército o trabajaron en las fábricas, pero que aporta una importante, invaluable y representativa fuente de información acerca de los años en guerra en un aspecto tan importante como lo es la vida cotidiana llena de mundos particulares.

testimonios del libro *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*.

³⁴⁹ Entrevista a Meda Montana Hallyburton Brennan. *op. cit.*, p. 9. “I said, “Don’t call me Rosie the Riveter, I am not Rosie the Riveter”, all respects to her job, I worked too hard to be called Rosie the Riveter.” T. A.

Conclusiones

War is too strange to be processed alone.
Phil Klay

Con el término “la Gran Generación”, el periodista estadounidense Tom Browak denominó en 1998 a los hombres y las mujeres que vivieron y sirvieron durante la SGM. Con ello, Browak buscó englobar la idea del alcance y la importancia que tuvo la SGM dentro del imaginario de la sociedad estadounidense³⁵⁰ si bien con un cierto toque de romanticismo y utopía: los estadounidenses siempre fueron los “buenos” y los “héroes” mientras que los integrantes del Eje nunca dejaron de ser los “malos” y los “villanos” de la historia. Este término no corresponde a la realidad que esta generación de hombres y mujeres, independientemente de su nacionalidad o del bando al que pertenecieron, experimentaron durante la guerra. Muertes, discapacidades, privaciones, sacrificios, traumas o pérdidas, fueron lo que la SGM les dejó una vez finalizada. Volver a la vida como era antes de la guerra resultó un camino complicado y lleno de obstáculos.

Pero a lo largo de esta investigación también se ha dejado claro que la SGM fue un periodo extraordinario de cambios y coyunturas en donde surgieron nuevas oportunidades para grupos antes relegados de la sociedad. La SGM trajo consigo cosas buenas y cosas malas por igual para todos sus actores. “La Gran Generación” en realidad fue una progenie de claroscuros: ni buena ni mala.

La SGM fue un suceso que se introdujo de forma por demás estrepitosa en las vidas de los ciudadanos estadounidenses. Durante los cuatro años que duró la participación de los Estados Unidos, la guerra se convirtió en el tema principal que acaparó las conversaciones de la gente en las calles o en sus hogares, los encabezados en los periódicos y las revistas, las temáticas de las películas o de los programas de radio. Además de que marcó las vidas de los estadounidenses en el ámbito individual y colectivo. Por eso, la obsesión de los aliados por lograr la paz se volvió el leitmotiv que se sintetizó en la letra mayúscula “V” por ser la inicial de la palabra *Victory*, razón por la cual fue multiplicada hasta el infinito en cientos de imágenes propagandísticas. De hecho, su tradicional figura en “V” formada por dos líneas que convergen en un ángulo dispuesto de forma inversa, se convirtió en una señal manual mediante la colocación de los dedos índice y medio separados y elevados, mientras los demás dedos permanecen cerrados sobre la palma. Pues bien, esta letra “V” con su par de

³⁵⁰ Allan Bérubé. *op. cit.*, p. 4.

líneas convergentes nos sirve aquí para subrayar, una vez más, que en el tema de la SGM y el *home front* fueron dos nuestros intereses al abordar este trabajo: el papel de la mujer y el de su representación en las imágenes de propaganda. Este doble leitmotiv forma parte, como apuntábamos desde la Introducción, de los propósitos de la historia cultural. Una corriente historiográfica que al pasar del estudio de la historia social de la cultura, al de la historia cultural de lo social lleva en sí las preguntas sobre el qué y el cómo de las representaciones: significaciones por las cuales las comunidades perciben y comprenden su sociedad. En nuestro caso estas representaciones se enfocaron hacia las prácticas o actividades desempeñadas por ellas antes, durante y después de la guerra y su correlación con las percepciones y discursos de ellos para enfrentar el conflicto bélico.

Para lograr lo anterior busqué dar cuenta, aunque fuera brevemente, del contexto y la magnitud con los que la guerra impactó la cultura y la vida cotidiana estadounidenses. Particularmente, me interesó estudiar a las mujeres que en su mayoría permanecieron en el *home front*, o bien, a las que, en menor medida, llegaron a viajar a los frentes de batalla como integrantes del ejército. Considero que una de las principales conclusiones a las que pude llegar con esta investigación es que los años de guerra en verdad significaron para la mujer el acercamiento a una serie de nuevas oportunidades que la llevarían a encontrar una clase muy particular de prosperidad y desarrollo dentro de la sociedad que antes no habían conocido. En otras palabras: la guerra trajo consigo un trastorno de los roles tradicionales de género. De estas nuevas circunstancias surgió, no sólo la idea de que ellas mismas se sintieran útiles y funcionales dentro del engranaje social bélico, sino que la idea, el eslogan propagandístico “Mientras dure” [*For the Duration*] en realidad podría ser reemplazado por “Para Siempre” [*Forever and Ever*]. La guerra hizo que muchas mujeres dejaran sus lugares de origen y se aventuraran a buscar trabajos que antes de la guerra resultaban impensables que llevaran a cabo. Trabajar en una fábrica y manejar maquinaria pesada. Vestir un uniforme y llevar a cabo actividades administrativas. Volar un avión o tirarse con paracaídas. Entrenarse en diferentes carreras técnicas y manejar sistemas de comunicación. Es decir, todo un campo de posibles donde la mujer, dentro del contexto bélico -fuera ella trabajadora, militar o civil-, no estuvo exenta de contradicciones y complicaciones. Sin embargo, las dificultades a las que ella se enfrentó no impidieron que ella misma considerara que su papel dentro de la sociedad estaba cambiando y que las condiciones en las que ella se desenvolvía, en verdad, se estaban tornando diferentes. La mujer comenzó a percibirse con

la misma capacidad productiva que el hombre y a manifestar verdaderas ganas de continuar llevando a cabo esas actividades. Por esto, busqué profundizar al respecto de esas dificultades, de esas contradicciones y de esas complicaciones a las que ella, invariablemente, se enfrentó durante los años que Estados Unidos estuvo en guerra. Es decir, tratar de responder a la inquietud de porqué, si el objetivo era mantener una fuerza de trabajo que se apoyaba en la población femenina para así liberar lugares para los hombres en el combate, las actitudes sexistas y misóginas persistieron. Una inquietud en la que aún hoy en día es pertinente e importante buscar reflexionar porque es cierto que en pleno siglo XXI, existen condiciones en las que pareciera que los pasos dados por las mujeres que vivieron en estos contextos de guerra poco han ayudado a alcanzar una igualdad de condiciones dentro de las sociedades. Entendiendo, claro, la igualdad de condiciones dentro de los entornos laborales, los salarios, los beneficios gubernamentales, etc. Aún hay mucho camino por recorrer y es precisamente por eso que esta investigación no pretendió concentrarse únicamente en los aspectos positivos, en los mitos y los romanticismos que inevitablemente surgen cuando se toca el tema de la mujer durante la SGM, sino también reparar en lo negativo, en las complicaciones que existieron para estas mujeres y que aún existen en ciertos ámbitos, no sólo laborales sino también en el terreno de lo individual.

El tema de la representación, percepción y recepción que tuvieron las imágenes propagandísticas puede ser intrincado y complicado. El estudio y valoración de estos aspectos lo puede ser aún más. Otro de los objetivos de esta investigación fue conocer las imágenes propagandísticas que surgieron durante la primera mitad del siglo XX como se vio en el segundo capítulo. Gracias a ellas identifiqué y reflexioné en la importancia de cuatro momentos cruciales para comprender el lugar de la mujer dentro de la sociedad occidental del siglo XX: el primero de ellos antes y durante la PGM, que rompió con los esquemas tradicionales de género del siglo XIX [esposa, madre, buena hija, señorita de sociedad]; el segundo de ellos durante los años veinte, que significó el encuentro y la aceptación de libertades y actitudes sin precedentes, impensables para ese entonces: libertad sexual, laboral, social o educacional; el tercero de ellos durante los años treinta, que buscó retomar los papeles tradicionales de la mujer; y el cuarto de ellos, con la llegada de la SGM, que considero no fue sólo una combinación de los factores anteriores, sino su descarga y explosión. Un momento en el que la mujer, en parte, y la sociedad, en general, comenzaron a darse cuenta de la infinidad de oportunidades que ella podía tener sin descuidar u olvidarse

de los papeles habituales, inherentes a ella. Después de identificar estas cuatro etapas en la transformación de las representaciones de la mujer y de su lugar dentro del tejido social en los primeros cuarenta años del siglo XX, surgieron una serie de preguntas relacionadas más que nada a la imagen de la mujer y la participación que ella tuvo dentro del contexto de la SGM. Esa imagen para ese entonces, no podía ser de otro modo, mantenía una serie de estereotipos con respecto a los trabajos o actividades que ella debía y podía llevar a cabo. Con esta investigación se trató de responder al por qué de la persistencia en conservar la idea de que para representar a una mujer fuerte era casi necesario eliminar automáticamente y por completo los elementos femeninos con los que siempre se la ha asociado. ¿Acaso la mujer no podía trabajar en una fábrica o vestir un uniforme militar y permanecer siendo femenina?, ¿por qué tenía que escoger entre la máquina o el color caqui de un uniforme militar y el lápiz labial sin posibilidad de tener o encontrar un equilibrio entre ambos? Para responder a estas interrogantes revaloré el papel que tuvieron los testimonios orales de las mujeres que participaron en varios de los ámbitos del esfuerzo de guerra en el *home front* estadounidense. Aunque fueron únicamente veinticuatro testimonios los seleccionados, las respuestas que encontré en ellos fueron invaluable en el desarrollo de esta investigación. Gracias a ellos pude acercarme a estas mujeres y a sus experiencias durante la guerra, a sus sentimientos al respecto y a la forma en la que el conflicto bélico las afectó en el ámbito de la vida cotidiana, no sólo a ellas sino también a sus familias, a sus amigos y a sus conocidos; pude acceder a una fuente de información valiosa: el testimonio oral de primera mano, y al escuchar en sus voces y ver en sus rostros lo que la SGM significó para ellas fue un momento dentro de la investigación en el que las preguntas que surgieron con los objetivos encontraron poco a poco las respuestas esperadas. Por lo anterior, señalo e insisto nuevamente, en la importancia y relevancia que tuvo el uso de las fuentes y los recursos en línea al momento de resolver las problemáticas que potencialmente podrían haberse planteado al decidir incorporar la memoria de las participantes durante la SGM en Estados Unidos. ¿De dónde obtener esa memoria? Esta problemática fue resuelta gracias a la posibilidad de consultar y obtener en línea tanto los testimonios orales del *Veterans History Project* de la Biblioteca del Congreso como los números de la revista *Life*.

Considero que la imagen de “Rosie the Riveter” es el mejor ejemplo de lo que esta investigación buscó aportar. Esta imagen, que nació como mera propaganda para alentar a la mujer estadounidense a trabajar en la industria bélica, con el tiempo terminó por convertirse

en todo un símbolo. En un inicio, busqué incluir en algún apartado la forma en la que la representación de “Rosie the Riveter” se ha transformado en los últimos años: de una imagen de mera propaganda a un ícono del empoderamiento femenino y de la lucha por la equidad entre los géneros, representándola ya no sólo dentro de un contexto bélico sino en el contexto que sea, buscando incluir en el mensaje “We Can Do It!” a todo tipo de mujer sin importar su etnia, religión, orientación sexual o situación socioeconómica. Sin embargo, y conforme al avance de la investigación, fueron apareciendo distintas interrogantes que terminaron por dejar de lado esta particular inquietud, la cual, no está desechada del todo. También, y como se mencionó en el tercer capítulo, traté de incluir, aunque fuera en una pequeña medida, alguna referencia de mujeres de origen latino que hubieran participado en el esfuerzo de guerra estadounidense. Ciertamente encontré un par de ellas pero considero que el tema de la mujer latina durante la SGM tiene mucho más que aportar cuando se logre acceder a las bibliotecas, archivos y bases de datos en Estados Unidos.

Por ello, y a pesar de que la investigación se inclinó a responder a otras inquietudes, considero que ambos temas sin duda alguna serán incluidos en el futuro de mis intereses y, por ende, de próximas investigaciones académicas porque las líneas de investigación acerca de estos temas continuarán abiertas.

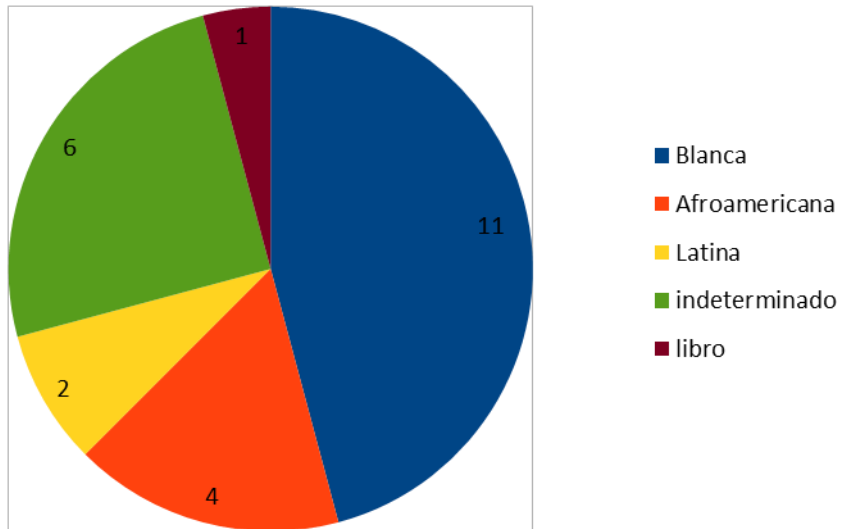
Anexos

Nombre	Lugar de origen	Edad	Etnia	Trabajo	Fuente
June E. Betz	Ohio	22 años	No especificado	Guadia Costera	Veterans History Project
Mary Barbara Brennan Dannaher	Massachusetts	21 años	No especificado	Marina	Veterans History Project
Betty Jeanne Boggs	Washington	17 años	Blanca	Remachadora	Libro <i>Rosie the Riveter Revisited</i>
Helen H. Brown	Virginia Occidental	19 años	No especificado	Remachadora	Veterans History Project
Mildred 'Micky' Darlene Tuttle Axton	Kansas	24 años	Blanca	Piloto	Veterans History Project
Sarah 'Sally' J. Davies Craig	Oregon	No especificado	Blanca	Remachadora	Veterans History Project
Mary Elizabeth Dorety	Nueva York	24 años	No especificado	Marina	Veterans History Project
Mary Doyle Keefe	Vermont	19 años	Blanca	Civil	Veterans History Project
Betty Jane Esmoil Cook	Iowa	22 años	Blanca	Remachadora	Veterans History Project
Meda Montana Hallyburton Brendall	Idaho	31 años	Blanca	Soldadora	Veterans History Project
Annelle H. Henderson Bulecheck	Texas	20 años	Blanca	Piloto	Veterans History Project
Violet Hill Gordon	Oakland	No especificado	Negra	Ejército	Veterans History Project
Fanny Christina Hill	Texas	24 años	Negra	Remachadora	Libro <i>Rosie the Riveter Revisited</i>
Martha E. Kidd	Pensilvania	20 años	Blanca	Marina	Veterans History Project

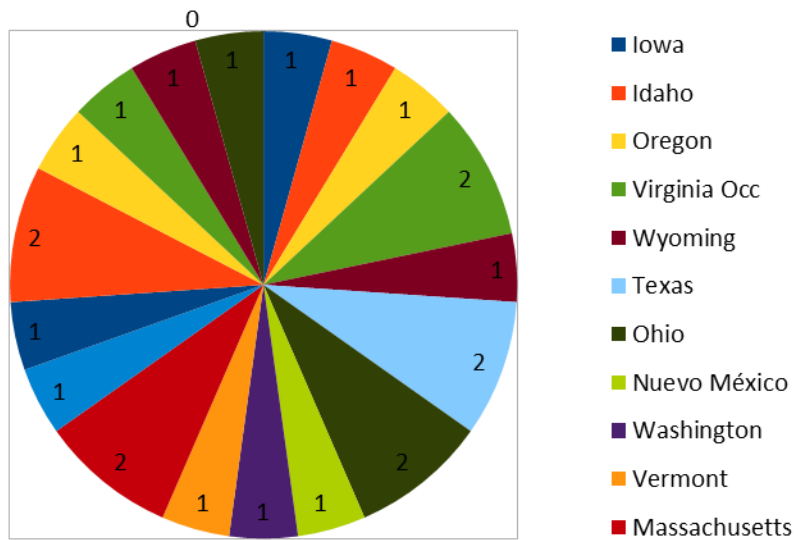
Christine E. Long	Kansas	24 años	Negra	Ejército	Veterans History Project
Juanita Loveless	Texas	17 años	Blanca	Remachadora	Libro <i>Rosie the Riveter Revisited</i>
Irene B. Norton Robertson	Virginia Occidental	19 años	Blanca	Remachadora	Veterans History Project
Leonora Porreca Whildin	Massachusetts	17 años	Blanca	Enfermera	Veterans History Project
Eva Romero Jacques	Colorado	21 años	Latina	Ejército	Veterans History Project
Charlotte N. Russell Coleman	Rhode Island	21 años	No especificado	Guardia Costera	Veterans History Project
Margarita Salazar McSweyn	Nuevo México	25 años	Latina	Remachadora	Libro <i>Rosie the Riveter Revisited</i>
Marye Stumph	Ohio	32 años	Blanca	Remachadora	Libro <i>Rosie the Riveter Revisited</i>
Mabel B. Wright-Laney Anderson	Kansas	27 años	Negra	Ejército	Veterans History Project
Dorothy Jeannette Mobley	Wyoming	18 años	No especificado	Remachadora	Veterans History Project

Gráficas

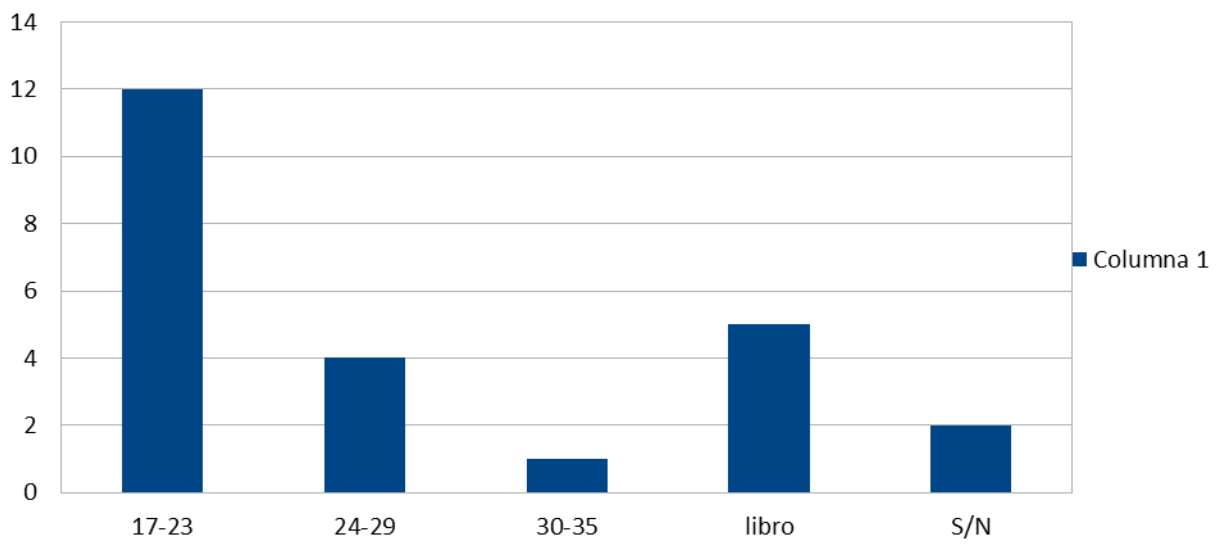
1. Raza



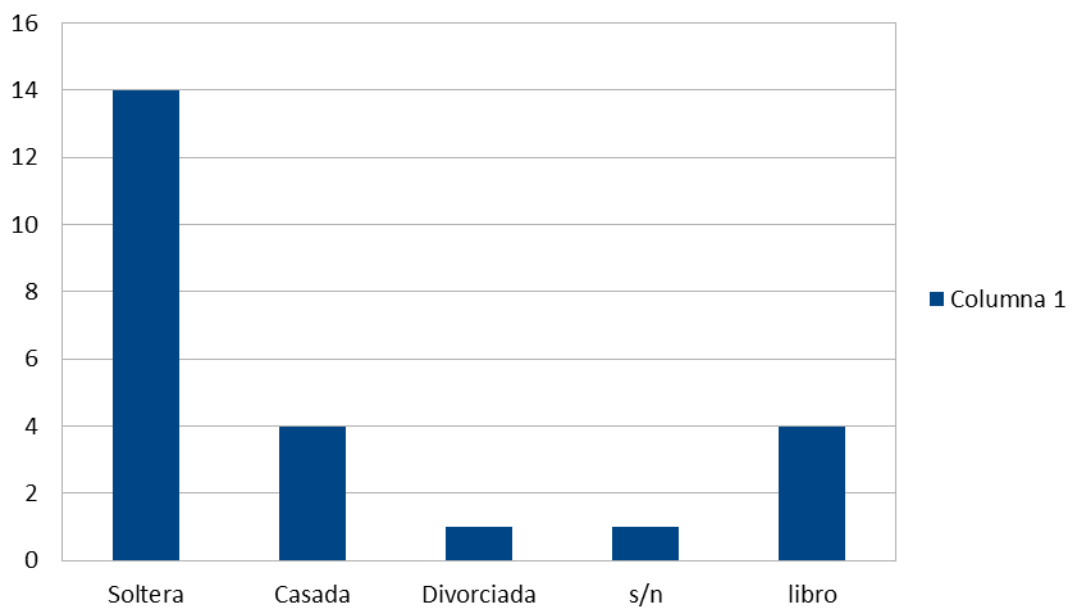
2. Lugar de nacimiento



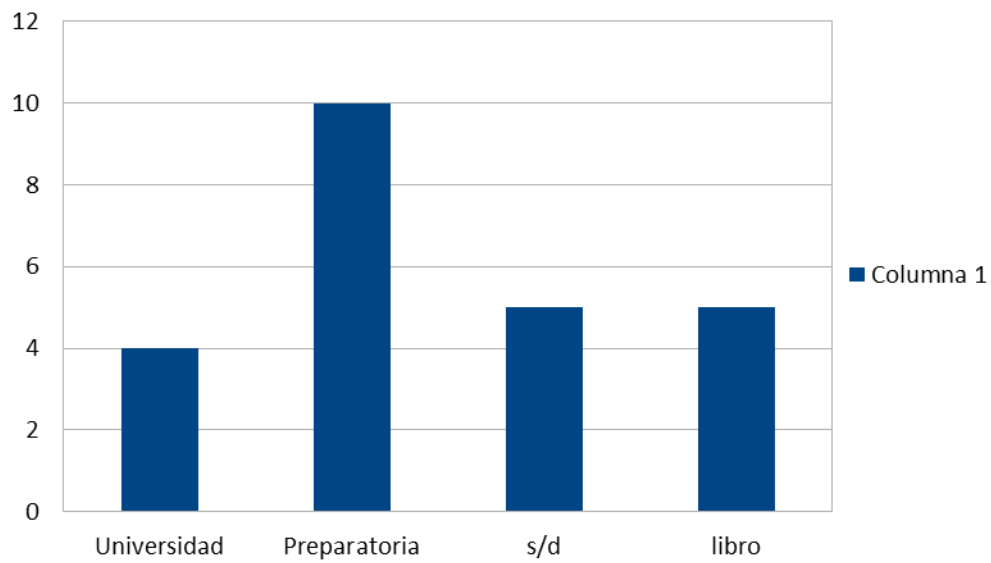
3. Edad durante la guerra



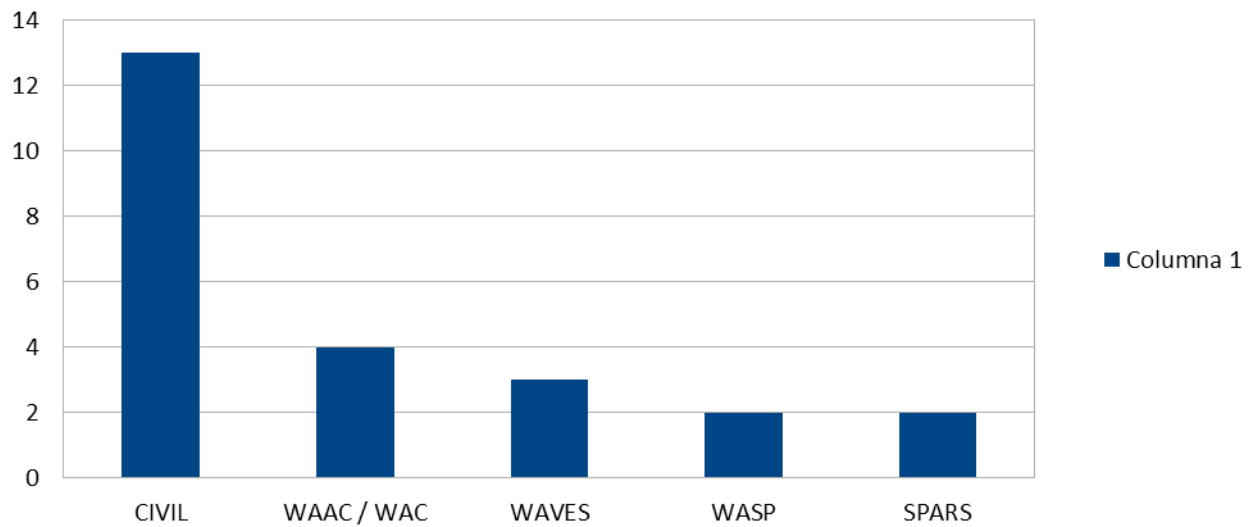
4. Estado civil



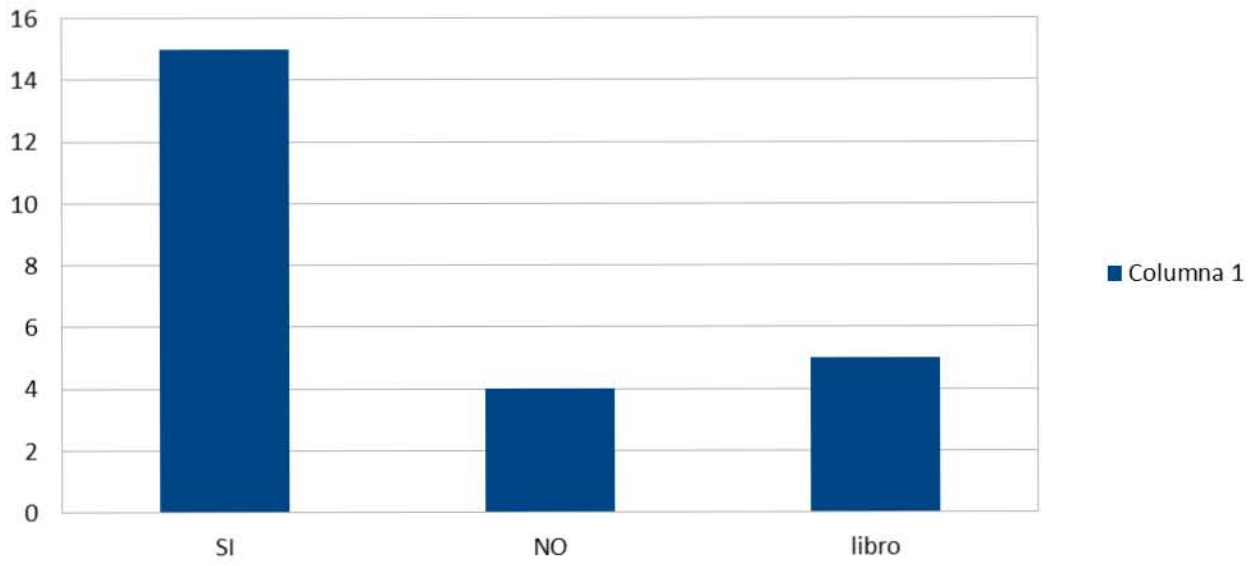
5. Escolaridad



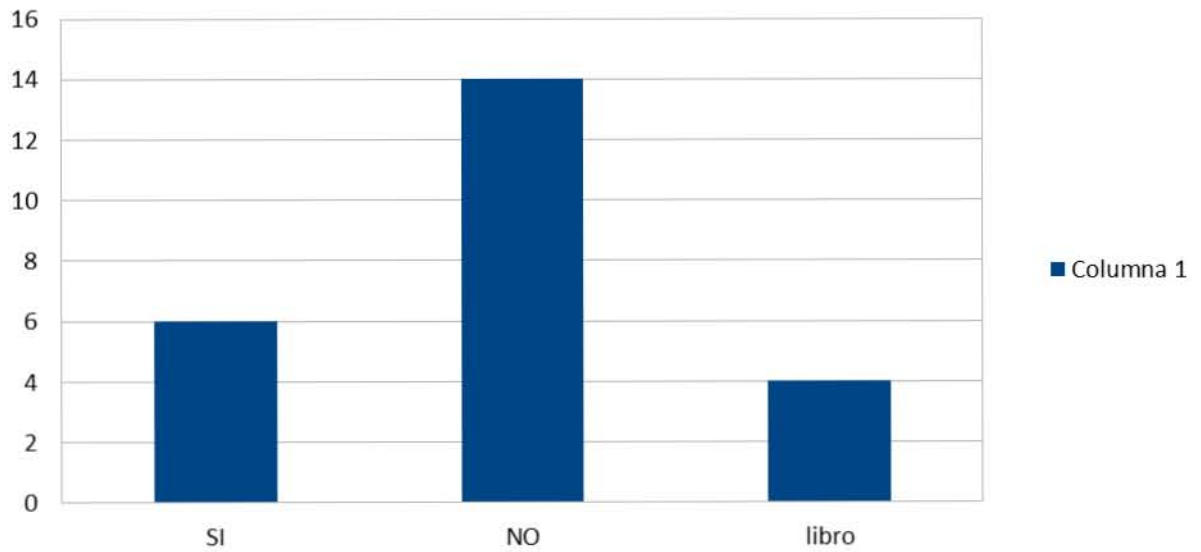
6. Actividad durante la Guerra



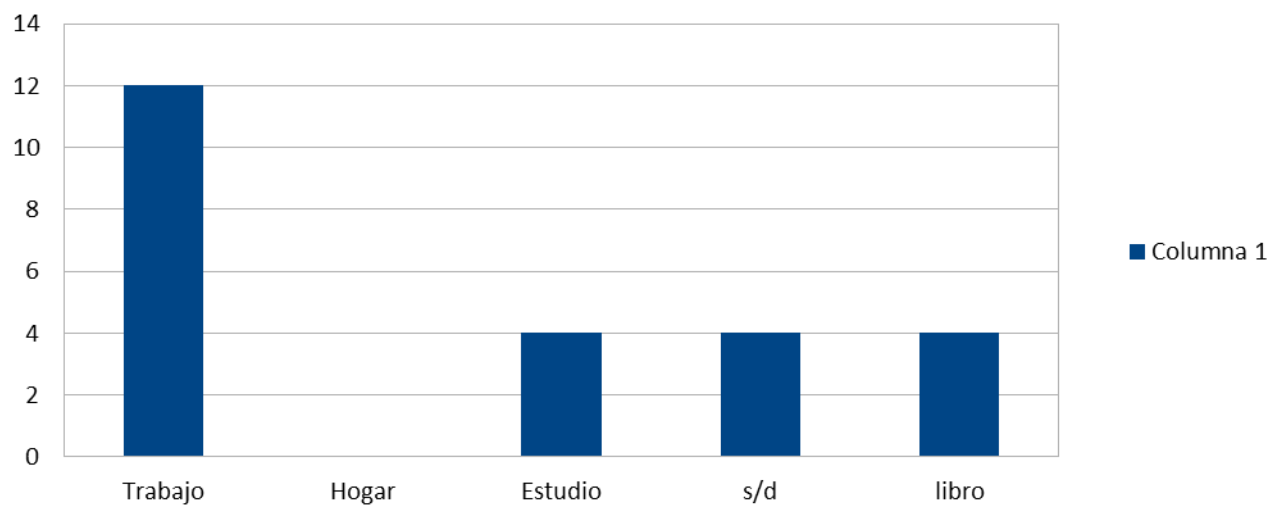
7. Movilidad por actividad



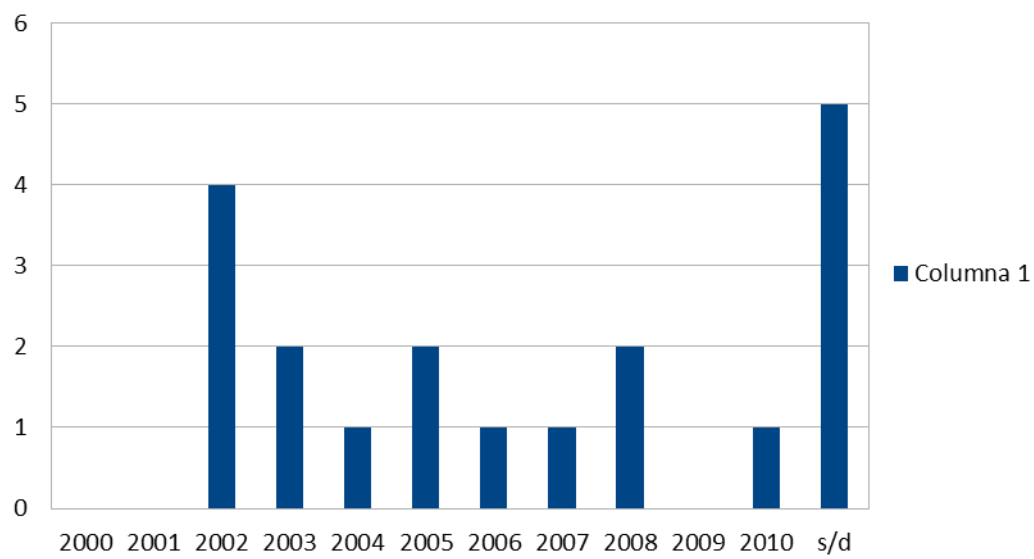
8. Hijos



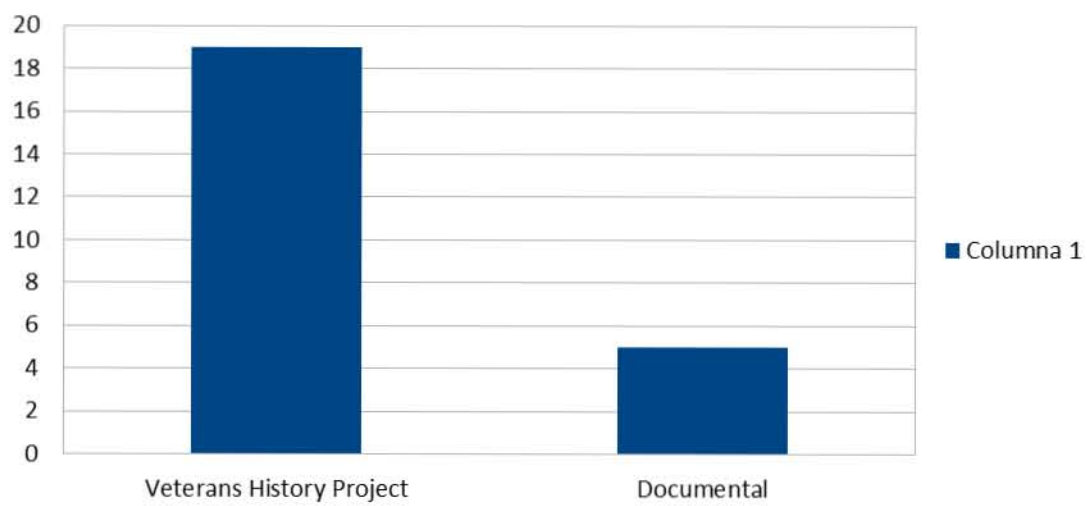
9. Actividad después de la Guerra



10. Fecha de la entrevista



11. Fuente de información



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Transcripción No. 1

Betty Cook

Civil-Remachadora

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.53275/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Marzo 8, 2007

Duración: 74 min.

Nombre: Betty Jane Esmoil Cook

Lugar de nacimiento: Independence, Iowa, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Sedona, Arizona, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Blanca

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Civil

Fecha de servicio: 1944-1945

Ubicación de servicio: Burbank, California

Prisionera de guerra: No

Nota: Betty Cook fue una *Rosie the Riveter* que después operó una máquina de perforado a presión en una línea de ensamblaje que producía el avión de combate P-38 Lightning

Entrevistadora: Carol Bruderman

Entrevistadora: Laura Bojanowski

Colaboradora: Jolene Pierson

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: Sedona Public Library, Sedona, Arizona

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/53275

Sujetos:

Cook, Betty Jane

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

Citado como:

Betty Jane Cook Collection

(AFC/2001/001/53275), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistadora Carol Bruderman: Carol Burderman and I'm with the Veteran's History Project of the Sedona Public Library and today I'm going to be interviewing...

Betty Cook: Betty Cook.

CB: Betty, what is your... where were you born?

BC: A little farm in Iowa, very agricultural center, Independence, Iowa

CB: Independence, Iowa. And your date of birth?

BC: December 2, 1922

CB: Can you tell us what your role was in World War II?

BC: Yes, I, I was taught to be a riveter by Lockheed but they moved me to a big drill press machine which is what I did after, just probably about a month in riveting so, and I was young and strong, tall and slim, probably a hundred pounds but I could manage a machine and the big forms that it took. When I look at production lines today I think how simple and how fundamental that they were... Can I tell what, uhm...?

CB: Yes, tell me how you got to be a Rosie the Riveter and then tell us some of your experience with it.

BC: Right, I had finished my sophomore year at College. I was working my way through and I would work as a mother's helper, lived in the home right near campus and that was roof and food and I would get two dollars a week, so when I finished my sophomore year and said: 'alright, my husband's found work at Fox Studio either, either Warner Bros or Fox Studio in electric, electrician and she said: 'I want to drive out' and this was 1944, it was really, the war was just intense then in Pacific and Atlantic and she said: 'Because I want you to take the children in the car, my sister's going along, your aunt Mildred and the four little children' and I thought 'oh, I keep them occupied'. This was an old 1939 chevy, there was no air conditioning, it was July, window's down, highway 66, you couldn't go over 40-45 miles an hour, there was a rule then because of the tires were going to the war effort, they needed and there were retreats on its car but can you imagine?, the long finally, finally Burbank where her husband found a little house. Well, I needed to find a job, my aunt wasn't the mothering type. Yes, you should find a job. I didn't have money for a train fair to go back to Iowa and I thought: 'well, I heard that in Lockheed they needed workers and they'll train you. Let me try that'. Well, from 1944,

summer to 1945, the peace was declared so there was a year plus that I operated this drill press machine. So that's how I got there but it was incredible what we passed along the way, old jalopies filled with fundamentals and family and kids going West to find their dream job, a job. They were from the [no claro] or from land that had just destroyed by the Dust Bowl and they were struggling to find a new life and I can remember the Oklahoma band, I can't remember the name, that would get together like a big picnic, people from the [no claro] Oklahoma, Kansas would get together, have a good Sunday. There was, that was after the Depression and the Depression years, I was ten to fourteen, we were on this little farm in Iowa and it was a struggle, you were fortunate to be on a farm that you could raise your meat and vegetables but you still had to buy sugar and coffee and flour and you just have to make this means somehow. Well, I felt, I really felt the sadness of these families that were, that dust and dirt that rolled, covering their houses in a half, they couldn't open a door or get in. The struggle they had, all crops were ruined, they couldn't plant anything but we plugged away until we got there. So, for that year when I was making two dollars a week taking care of the children there were no [no claro] next days but I would arrange classes in the morning so that in the afternoon I could get there to help fix the dinner, wash the dishes, bathe the kids, put them to bed, read them a story and then try to study but, uh, I was just fortunate to have that so there I could make eight cents an hour. I tell you, I could put some money in the bank but I had to find a place to live so I, now then Lockheed was out in just a country area of Burbank. There was like houses scattered, little cottages maybe twelve blocks from the factory where one, because of the shorty take place for people to stay. There was an advantage taken by home owners. This woman had a cottage and she crammed, she had a [no claro] breakfast, she crammed people in and I found a room there, now a room, I have a room and the food she took all of our ration cards for meat, sugar, all that, butter, our food was miserable, she would pack a sack lunch for me there would be a baloney sandwich, an apple or banana and maybe a couple of cookies. Well, you didn't starve, you manage somehow but after working four hours you could take that break and eat, get a glass of water, fuss it to washed down the bloody sandwich.

CB: Yum!

BC: Yum, but I walked, there was a long walk just through like a countryside until I came to this little cottage. I was on swing shift for midnight and I would sing walking back.

Today, you wouldn't do that at midnight, walking alone but thank goodness and I would... let me tell about this machine operating to show you how basic tools you worked with on assembly lines. This was a wing out from the plane, stacks of them. Over here was a big, like, plastic, uh, not plastic propels but something very firm, heavy that you clanged the wing up to and there's this middle table with a pin, under this form was a track, you heave this up over the pin, your foot operated the drill that came down, they had over the drill machine, there was a place for water and oil which you had to keep a bit...

CB: Lubricated...

BC: Lubricated so you would move this to cut out this hole that would be for wiring of that wing further down the assembly line so, and then you would lift that off, unclang the wing up, stack it, it was cut, you had two stacks. Take another one, clanged it on, that just went on and on and it was heavy but think how simple today that would have been, cut precisely by some machine.

CB: Right, it's amazing that long we've gone when they had machines like that. How long of those you have to do a day?

BC: Oh, I can't, I can't imagine... uh, I can't even guess.

CB: Hundreds, thousands, millions?

BC: Well, at least a hundred.

CB: Wow.

BC: Now, they keep the assembly lines rolling. Lockheed had this plan: perfect attendance for a year, you got to write a paddy bag when the test pilot did a run and oh, that was a goal, believe me but I ruined it by getting a stiffed role in the winter... winter, I think Christmas. My aunt and uncle, both had gone back to Iowa, I was alone so I would go to the veterans hospital and go from room to room talking to the veterans. I tried to bring some little thing but mostly just sitting and talking to them and praying that my marine brother in the Battle of the Pacific would come back and then on, on Saturday, Sunday I would take 35 cents, which was not minimal win, when you're making about 85 cents an hour but I would take that for a bus trip to Hollywood, I had to transfer to another bus and I worked and the stage door canteen on weekends and I would pass out doughnuts and coffee and chat and dance, oh, there was a marvelous band every time on the stage at the stage door canteen and these guys would leave and as you

danced you tried not to think where are they going?, would they come back?, would they be wounded?, would they survive?, you tried to push that out and have a cheerful conversation as you gave them food and danced.. but that's what I did outside of writing letters to my dear friend who was killed in the D-Day, letters were from all the world desperately needed but we would receive in return the mail, Victory Mail, this tiny little, have you seen them?

CB: The red, white, blue envelope?

BC: No, just a tiny page that they would take a letter that the GI had written and it was like a photocopy so that was very tiny and tiny print, I have some and that's what you would get, it was a very small envelope.

CB: I think they censored the mail.

BC: Oh, they did.

CB: Yeah.

BC: They did, they censored it and photo, presses.

CB: They didn't wanted you to hear.

BC: That was your letter.

CB: How was the, uh, the feeling in the factory amongst the other workers at that time?

BC: It was good, someone asked me when I gave that talk at the museum about harassment from supervisors or anyone, oh, no, that wasn't... as you walked through lines to get to your assembly line the guys would whistle at you, you're young and pretty but that didn't mean anything, that was not harassment.

CB: Was a compliment.

BC: Yeah, and, uh, it... they more or less thought 'well, that's ok, she's doing the job, you're doing it' but you know it wasn't like another man working beside, I'm sure...

CB: Yeah.

BC: They had to get over that because the women were just full force in learning how to do these things and they did.

(Risas)

CB: How strong. So, uh, would you say that in that time the mind of women changed because they did go out and did things in the work force?

BC: Yeah, yes, it gave them a confidence that, 'Well, yes, I could do other things outside of keep house', yeah, or, if they... I'm talking about the women who did not have a

secretarial background or a nurse, they had their career but this is just the average woman that was married or single and... the last month, August, they moved me off the assembly line to a little dinky office, it was at the end of one assembly line. When you went into work, the cards were on a rack, a mail rack, you found your name in your card and clocked in, punched in and punched a hole and you put it back so that last month in that tiny office I was computing the work hours for this different cards, helping with pay role, that went on the pay role and then I was not fired but released because I was no longer needed, the assembly lines were...

CB: And the men were coming back from the war and they wanted their jobs back...

BC: Right

CB:... so that pushed the women and what was the feeling of the women that were let go?

BC: Oh, they didn't resent that, they find another job, that was, uh, the men were home, that was the goal, the whole country, it's hard to describe how united they were from children to women, anyone, everything they could give to the war effort to bring those, to support them in battle and to bring them home, today which is why we want out men back home from Iraq. I thought after that war, there would never be another war, I was young.

CB: So, after you left Lockheed, then what did you do?

BC: Well, I took that bit of savings and thought: 'do I put it in train fair to go back to Iowa?, to College?, no, I'll just go to UCLA right there in Los Angeles' and it was fortunate that I did because I've been a bus ad major in the Iowa College and I'm standing in line to register at the business administration and here is this poster: 'New Curriculum, a peril designed in merchandising', I knew it, that was it and it was, it was, it was a good career.

CB: So tell us about that career. How long did you go to school?

BC: I went two years to UCLA, I did not graduate, I thought this is so [no claro] trying to [no claro] peanut butter and crackers better work I could find to get through those two years so I took all the basics in everything they threw at us, all fundamentals, I didn't go on with more math, I needed more, uh, economics, I needed more language skills, classes to get a diploma but I knew I had want I needed and then it meant that I had to sort of apprentice in field which in that time I make them in Saks Fifth Avenue in Beverly

Hills, at beautiful costumes salons, fabric from France, beautiful gowns were made for movie actresses, I can remember working on a blouse for Claudette Colbert. This, you have to be an assistant to the seamstress, this workrooms were back from the glamorous chandelier and models and fitting rooms, you know, they didn't see us but you, I learned tremendously just to pick everything that I could. In, I worked for both, Saks Fifth Avenue and [no claro] and also in those days, you always did a colored sketch of the gown that you thought that person would look good in, wasn't always the model in the gown that feel the desire so, uh, then I went into sportswear which California was so known for, you know, and at this sportswear factory I was an assistant designer and that was really a foundation of learning and while I was with that sportswear factory I wanted to have my heels retreated, the high heels that you wore would wear off, you had little metal plates that could be put on; so this was in the garment district at this big factory, not far was a little shoe shop and sitting there kind of looking at the people whilst fixing I see this ad, what a [no claro] shop in Hawaii and I thought 'why not just try', so I wore my outfit in design and portfolio and this was in a home, it was like an office in a living room looking at other applicants and thought 'oh, no, they've got so much more experience than I' because they were in their forties but I got the job. She said, 'I knew I wanted you when I saw you walking down the sidewalk and entered into the front door'

CB: Wow!

BC: Wow

CB: How old were you?

BC: I was twenty, uh... six. I didn't get through College at early age because, uh, I was, I was twenty two when I was Rosie the Riveter, I was twenty four but I had stayed out of College a year, I mean at High School a year taking care of the home when my mother passed away on the farm so I was needed by my little sister, all the care and cooking thing.

CB: And how old were you when your parents passed?

BC: Sixteen and eighteen, but so naïve. When I think of children today at eleven or twelve I'm staggered.

CB: They're brilliant, aren't they?

BC: Well, we're all wise but, uh, it, it was a good career, I worked for this shop for a while

and I thought 'I want to try start my own little costume shop'.

CB: So, you actually moved from California to Hawaii?

BC: Right, she payed my passage. Big luxury liner, the [no claro] which is no longer but it was fantastic. She said, 'You want to fly or by ship?' and I said, 'I can take a trunk and more things on the ship than I can flying', so that's why I choose the ship, I had no idea it was a luxury liner and, uh, but then I started my own little business right out of my cottage and my cottage and where the cottage was nearly on the beach, today I rise and tells... when I see aerial footage I go 'no!', everything was one storey high, businesses along the avenue were maybe three or four but no part rises like today and I was there four years in Hawaii and the last couple of years I [no claro]

CB: Where you on the big island of Hawaii?

BC: Just to visit, no. In Honolulu.

CB: Oh, in Honolulu. So that's where you worked?

BC: Right

CB: In Honolulu, four years.

BC: Right and then I set at the sport wear factory but there was another person that was after me and after me and I think I had this job at a factory for about two years. I set up the assembly lines, I thought the girls, I thought the cutters, everything because of my factory background and it was really going in my, my, my styles really solve, they were for the [no claro] but this was just extra, my line was the working girls clothes, they had to be, either coming by freight or airfreight from the States and so I could beat all the prices [no claro], skirts and blouses and everything I designed and they were just crazy about them but the women that came after me had a costume shop and she said, 'I want you to set up a little factory and for in costume so I could send things to [no claro] tailor, [no claro] in the States', oh, well that's interesting. Well, no she came after me until finally I did and that's the work I had left after the war. San Francisco, big propeller, kinda big propeller, noisy.

CB: So, how was that, what year was that when your set up shop in Hawaii?

BC: Well let's see, I was there from 49 to 53

CB: And then you went back to California?

BC: To San Francisco

CB: To start...

BC: To marry, that's where I was married and then right away I looked for work and I found a job as an assistant designer in a woman's wear factory in San Francisco called [no claro] of California and I did that for a couple of years until my husband said, 'How would you like two years in Germany', I said, 'I would love it', because my grandparents came from the Prussian area of Germany. My mother was a beautiful German blonde with blue eyes.

CB: So tell us about how did your husband gets, how did your old family lived in Germany?

BC: Oh, this was, this was 1956 and army wives could, if there was housing or whatever they could manage to go with a man who is stationed in certain place in Germany because there was no other housing. Well, they didn't fly those families over or by ship, so they put us by rail, sure, train, to New York City and then we boarded a big transport ship, Army transport ship and it was January one, New Year's day, crowds and everything and freezing cold and we were on the deck as we see the statue of Liberty fade away as we were going, well, it took eleven to cross, storm, storm all the way and the ship would heave over the water and shake and smash, everyone was... no, this was a trip transport ship, the troops were bellow and on the main deck were women and children and they weren't allowed to mingle but civilian men also could be with their families, so in one cabin was a bunk and two bunks, my husband and I and a crib for a small child but that crib wouldn't standing still, I would tell my eighteen month old boy and put him in the bunk beside me and there was a rail like a car rail on the bunk, I grabbed that, this under that and bulked grabbed because you needed it in rough weather. So, here he is, we both [no claro] it (risas) and the troops we're all like 'you were lucky, you've got paper bands and we don't don't' (risas)

CB: Oh, boy!, what was the name of the ship?, do you recall?

BC: Oh, the USS Randall, USS General Randall, yeah and when finally, so many of us who went to the doctor, we were so sick we needed something for the sea sickness, then I could [no claro] on deck, whether there were some chairs or you could stand on the rail and I could see the white cliffs of Dover but we weren't landing on England we going into Bremerhaven in Germany. It was a rough ride.

CB: It was very difficult. So, and your husband he didn't actually joined the Army, he just worked for it.

BC: No, he was a civilian, worked for them, which would be the federal employee.

CB: Ok, and what was his job?

BC: He was a finance and accounting officer, ranking... they ranked the civilians, he ranked as an officer and for example and, well, there were the military officers clubs, that's where we went for dinner or there could be entertainment for the troops coming through, could be a band or, well, the first year we were stationed in Germany, Reinstein, still an open airfield... Presley was stationed there. The second son was born in an Army Hospital at [no claro] which is up in the mountains, that Hospital never closed and it grew and today that's where the military that were wounded in Iraq are formed at [no claro] but I never dreamed that it was when he was born there that he would, much of his life, especially from age ten on, in school and High School would be in Germany and his German is so fluid, he's given talks on TV programs of financial things, he speaks without an accent.

CB: Amazing. And you spent thirty years in Germany?

BC: And France, Germany, France....

Salto al minuto 48:55

CB: Did you get a feeling from, a general feeling from the soldiers that didn't come back at that time?

BC: You mean way back in WWII?

CB: Yes.

BC: It wasn't that, 'I know I'm going into battle, I know I'm coming back', it was difficult to say goodbye, it was hard, you, they knew that you were going to keep reaching out to them in any way you could whether it was working in the factories, Jeeps, well, lipstick factories, lipstick casings they went into bullets, making bullets; typewriter factories went into making machine guns, things were just all changed, everything to support out troops, there were no car manufactures, it all went into Jeeps, tanks, Chrysler build a big place for tanks. The men, as they left, they knew they were in danger but you gave them a hug and just prayed that, 'you're going to be to one that comes back'. My brother had, was in terrible battles in the Pacific and he came home, that was incredible because some of the marines, the ships, the troops that just waited through water to get to an island, you see pictures of them and that island was occupied by Japanese and they're shooting just, it was mayhem, it was awful.

CB: From that experience living through WWII, is there anything that you could tell to the young people of today?, is there any advice...?

BC: Well, communication is better today, they can, in the US or in Iraq e-mail, they can keep in touch with e-mail, this is nothing that we had, we had to wait for letters. I'm glad there is not a draft, there were so many free young men, they can enlist today but they're not drafted and saying, 'this, you're going to be here, stand in line for physical, you're in the Army, you're in the Navy, whatever, it was mandatory. Today, I can only say, just, there is no special advice except 'hang in there, bring your prayers' but to Truman, I mean to George Bush, what could I say?

CB: Say it, say it, Betty.

BC: Oh, oh, I can understand going into Afghanistan searching for Bin Laden, that should've been it but I'm praying that my young grandchildren will see the day when Iran and Iraq are a democracy or if their religion prevents that something peaceful anyway.

CB: Something peaceful... Is there that you wanna add that we haven't covered?, any of your experience?, some funny things that happened?, unusual?, frightening?

BC: Wow, tracking back... well, this is just humorous, it's really not... all movement was by train really, oh, young women didn't had cars, maybe the man that was their date, he would've had a car but not always; but traveling by train, after I finished at the College I knew I was going to go work but I thought, 'I have to make a trip back to see that little three year old sister that I had adopted, she's seventy eight, whatever and the cars were always filled with either sailors or soldiers on leave going home, there was still, yes, there was peace declared, you know, but they were still military men, they were released yet from duty, I know that I by 1945, in the fall, when I registered at UCLA, those that had been released from the military were in sleeping bags all night in a long line there out on the grass, so determined to get into the classes, they wanted to go on with their lives, to build their lives but on the train I can remember, you could just travel by couch, you couldn't get the day and the night to get to Iowa, you couldn't afford a sleeper bunk. So, sitting by a sailor he said, 'You're not from a farm', I said, 'Yes, I grew up in a farm', 'Well, you don't look like a farm girl' (risas) Well, I was a dress designer starting out and I had to make my own clothes through all those years, I just had a neck for it even as a High School girl I made my clothes. Out of anything somebody would hand down but humorous incidents, I can't think of many humorous, there was... there was struggle,

you had to know, have confidence in yourself, 'I can do it, I'll make a living, I'll do something to make my parents proud', that was a goal.

CB: That you reached then (risas). When you were Rosie the Riveter, did you, I'm sure you acquired friendships during that job and did you maintained them throughout your life after the war?

BC: Not many through workers. You went, there were certain entrances that were where your assembly line would be, that area that you entered with your time card and you, even on lunch break, which was half hour, you really didn't have a chance to get acquainted with the woman that worked two machines down, it would have been a man there, it was, there weren't many little get-together celebrations or anything, it was strictly work but, uh... something slipped through my mind that I was... sorry.

CB: It's ok.

BC: Eighty five almost does it.

CB: It happens to me at forty six

Entrevistadora Laura Bojanowski: You were talking about friendships outside of work.

BC: Oh, yes, I made them in College, at that University, that's where you're in an art class or whatever and you're all involved in the same thing and you get acquainted and that was, that was where I made the friendships and the, the work that I did, was 194... I was companion to a widow lady in Beverly Hills and she was a very cold person, I had a room that was maid's room of the kitchen that had a bath, it was a maid's room but I didn't mind that, it was a very beautiful home and the son and daughter-in-law, wanted, they interviewed me and wanted me to come in to be a companion, fix their dinner but to chat with her was, she wasn't but I tried and I was always outgoing and then she decided on this Christmas party, so 'I won't need you any longer', so I went to the [no claro] on campus and thought, wanted, you know and here was a name I didn't recognized but I went for the interview at home and then I discovered he was an actor and his home was in Bel Air, beautiful, the wife was expecting a baby and they had two other little children and John Hubbard, well it may not mean anything to you but oh, what a family!, and I was so lucky. I can remember I set up the nursery, I painted, I decorated, I fixed the crib, I did curtains, was just delighted to be able to do it and so was she so we became very close. So some along the way, where I had a room and food and maybe a dollar, maybe not, I don't know, I managed.

CB: And these friendships that you made when you were in the United States, were you able to carry those over in Germany and France?, trying to communicate?

BC: Once in a while, alright, from John Hubbard's home I became acquainted with a maid across the street and they made a trip to Germany and we got together, an old friend and his wife from Hawaii where I used to sail in the sailboat with them were working on, off the coast of Africa and they came, so, somehow ships would pass, you connect but otherwise it was with a card or writing and when my first two years of College, which was 1942 to 1944, and those were terrible war years and there was the draft there were two big brick buildings, men's dormitories on the campus in Iowa and most all the men were drafted, maybe a hand full, so they stationed Army men, they called them in officer training but really it was a holding situation on different campuses that made use of men's dormitories and this wasn't just in Iowa, this was all over but the girls that dated and I dated one of the cadets, we were told with a whisper that at night at eleven o'clock they were boarding the train and leaving. The girls, well, it was not supposed to be known but we were at the train station, a little, this was a little main western town where the College was and it was the old fashioned train station with a platform and where they were saying goodbye, hugging them and the boy I was dating was from Wisconsin and had this famous automobile and this was the surge of the troops going to the East on ships, going over and he was part of the D-Day invasion, he was killed. It was, there were so much heartache and the town right next to Independence, which is Waterloo, there was a family of five boys, brothers, that were drafted but in the Navy, together, and they were killed in action, the ship was bombed and sank, then they had a rule: no more brothers together. So there was such a miserable heart aching time, then everyone was all sure when it was over and we danced in the street and it was over, they're coming home, they're all coming home and then in Europe I watched Vietnam, Korea, Vietnam, I would have young German people friends, they were eighteen, nineteen, in Germany neighbors and so they said, 'What are you doing in Vietnam?, get out of there', and you had to be American diplomat, you had to live right, be, you know, your children behave properly, well you had to be diplomats wherever you lived in France or Germany and you would try to give them a government explanation about what we were doing in Vietnam, it wasn't easy when all you wanted to say was, 'get out of there'.

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CB: Is there anything else you'll like to share with us?

BC: No... it was... I was just part of the women who wanted so badly to have a job to help win this war, get these machines to them and what they need.

CB: Well, you played a huge role in making that happen, thank you.

BC: I know I was not with, working with the blue prints but certainly put a lot of muscle into it (risas)

LB: Yeah.

CB: So you look kind of Rosie the Riveter, the big muscle arms? (risas)

BC: Oh, this is when you could first start wearing pants out in public...

CB: Yeah, it was.

BC: Yeah and many of the women wore overalls, I had some, that's just that... because I had very long hair, it never really been cut, I had braids and I had a bun and bands but I wore a very big face shield so I didn't have to tie the bandana or tie my hair up, the face shield because of the oil water splattered as the bit worked... yeah, but it was, it was in time.

CB: Yes, huge woman's movement.

BC: Yes, it was, it was in this huge migration of people to the golden state of California not knowing where they were going, find a roof or anything and fortunately my uncle, when he went, ahead of my aunt and children, found a little house to buy but to rent... this was an interesting time, this is not, but, I also found after this ruined workplace and I was still working in Lockheed, I found an ad in the paper of a mother and a daughter who had a room for rent in their apartment and you could use the kitchen, I answered the ad and they took me in and we became good friends but the daughter worked at Disney Studio and she said, 'because you're on swing shift four to midnight, you have warning free and lunch time, why don't you come with me over to Disney and see the studio?', 'oh, I'd love to', all right, it was a white blackboard building and another wooden building was like a little snack bar for the employees, a little cafeteria and when you walked in, the entry way seemed the intro was about this big, there were paintings, beautiful oil painting of some of the artists that worked there and then we went into this big room, I wouldn't say warehouse big but almost, there were long artist tables, like architect's use, that would raise up a little bit and it was like, this was right after Snow

White and the Seven Dwarfs, but they worked on, first table there were sketching, artist was sketching, they had the story and this basket was filled in like that, so my, my friend introduced me to this artist at the first table and I said. 'This drawing goes away?', 'You can have it with you if you want', I picked up a big handful and then we went to the next table and it was like a little assembly line, the, were my friend worked was, there like celluloid, like this, then the artist drawing copy underneath that transparent and the paint was sort of acrylic paint, I think, and there was a closet that I saw with gallons of paint where they filled their pallet and work and, so everything was, they was nothing, today they do with computers, it's incredible. The films that Disney turns out with, computer work, the it was just artist and then, then those films, the painted went to the photography room and then they were filed in files, this movie was filed, that was filed, today they're rare item collectors but I remember Disney as...

CB: Very different...

BC: Blackboard building

LB: Yeah.

CB: Yeah, and thank you.

BC: All right, and that's beside the Rosie stories.

CB: Betty, we have to say thank you for sharing your story and thank you for what you did for America and you've certainly helped make the way for us. Thank you so much.

BC: You know, this was, this was what we wanted to do, bring these boys home and it was after the miserable Depression, so everybody was united, energetic to really bring this country back and we wanted it for our children.

CB: You did a great job.

BC: (risas)

CB: Thank you.

Transcripción no. 2

Mary Keefe

Civil

LINK: <http://content.library.ccsu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/VHP/id/5694>

Fecha de la entrevista: Febrero 29, 2008

Duración: 38 min.

Nombre: Mary Doyle Keefe

Lugar de nacimiento: Vermont, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Connecticut, Estados Unidos

Nota: Material original conservado en la Central Connecticut State University.

Género: Femenino

Raza: Blanca

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Civil

Ubicación de Servicio: Arlington, Vermont, Estados Unidos

Prisionera de guerra: No

Nota: Keefe fue escogida para posar para el artista Norman Rockwell para la realización de una ilustración de 'Rosie the Riveter', la cual fue la portada de "The Saturday Evening Post."

Entrevistadora: Eileen Hurst

Colaboradora: Eileen Hurst

Afiliación/Organización Colaboradora: Central Connecticut State University

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/67442

Sujetos:

Keefe, Mary

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

Citado como:

Mary Keefe Collection

(AFC/2001/001/67442), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistadora Eileen Hurst: Today is February 29th 2008, I'm interviewing Mary Doyle Keefe at her home in Sainsbury, Connecticut. Interviewer is Eileen Hurst from Central Connecticut State University, also present is Mary's daughter Mary Ellen Keefe. For the record, Mary, would you state your full name and your birthday.

Mary Doyle Keefe: My full name is Mary Doyle Keefe.

EH: And your birthday?

MDK: July 30, 1922.

EH: And your address?

MDK: McLean Village, in Sainsbury, Connecticut.

EH: For the record, Mary is known for her work during World War 2, she's a civilian, being interviewed for the Veteran's History Project. Mary, where were you living at the time WW2 broke up?

MDK: In Arlington, Vermont

EH: Arlington, Vermont?

MDK: Arlington, Vermont, yeah.

EH: And how old were you at the time?

MDK: 19, I think.

EH: So you were young. You remember the bombing at Pearl Harbor?

MDK: Oh, yes, definitely.

EH: What do you remember about that?

MDK: I was, my... my mother was a telephone operator in a small town of Arlington, Vermont and I was working that Sunday at the... in the telephone office and we got the news, so...

EH: And how do you hear about the news?

MDK: I don't... somebody called and so everybody started calling or I don't know about it...

EH: How was the scene like in the telephone office?

MDK: It was a small office and my mother was there and I was there and I think my sister was there and that was it. We were all excited, we... about that happening...

EH: What were your feelings about the war?

MDK: Pardon me?

EH: What were your feelings about the war?

MDK: Well, at that time we did, we, the women felt that they were trying to do things for the people... we did eating and sent blood over and stuff like that... we felt that we should help.

EH: Now, your plane to fame is for your posing for Norman Rockwell, can you tell me about how all that came about?

MDK: Yes, the... Norman Rockwell brought, brought his family and bought a place in Arlington, came from New York, he had three boys and he wanted them to school and got started before the war got going, and so they bought a place in Arlington and uh, they ended into everything there, they were just like one of the people there, very, very cooperative, very nice, very pleasant people.

EH: So you knew the family?

MDK: Yes, definitely.

EH: Being a small town did everybody pretty much know everybody else?

MDK: That's right.

EH: How small was Arlington?

MDK: I don't remember.

EH: A couple of thousands people?

MDK: I think it was, 20 thousand or something like that.

EH: Now, how did Norman Rockwell come to choose you for his famous portrait?

MDK: Well, he, he, after he move there, he used a lot of the people from Arlington. He'd see people and he had an idea of what he wanted so he would ask if you could sit for him, so he, he used to come in, he or his wife Mary came to pay their bill at the telephone office and so he knew who I was so he just called one day and asked if I could come down and sit, he had a photographer that took all the pictures. You sat there for a while and, well, they took all these pictures, then, then he would take what he wanted, like, the big arm and the big legs, so...

EH: Now, when he asked you to sit, did he tell what would he had intended?, did he tell you that he was intending to do a Rosie the Riveter for the Graph?

MDK: No, I don't, he just, he probably said something because he had all the poses to put on, the dungarees and the shirt and the, all the the things that went with it and the... he would cut out what he wanted, the big arm, the big legs, and put them on as this so and then he would draw from that, so you didn't have to sit while he, while he was painting and that's how he got the big, the bigness of the, of the woman.

EH: So you mean you didn't really look like that photograph?

MDK: No, I... I certainly didn't

EH: (Risas) So the time you actually stayed in his studio was long enough for the photographer to take the photographs?

MDK: Oh, yes, yeah.

EH: Then, when Rockwell was painting the picture, did you come in to his studio at all during painting to see the progress?

MDK: No, I went down... he called me another time, he wanted to change the color of the blouse, I think it was at the time and he wanted to change it, so I went back down put all the clothes on, it was navy blue blouse and they took all the pictures again and, so just a few hours and then he does the painting from that so... then, when it came out in Saturday Post he called me to tell me that he apologize for making me such a large woman.

EH: (risas) Did you know that you would look like?

MDK: No, no...

EH: When was the first time you saw the new you?

MDK: In Bedington, Vermont, right nearby, bigger town, there was a, a shop there put the, the Post out on the, on the sidewalk in front of the, the place where they had all the newspapers and everything and I didn't, that was out, I didn't see it, I just heard about it but I didn't see it. Actually, I never saw the picture until, when, he left Arlington and he was living in Stockbridge and my sister was in [no claro], that's where she lived and she called and told me that they were gonna have the picture, painting there on display on Stockbridge and so, we went down, we had a private showing and that's when I first saw the whole, the big large picture.

EH: And when, what year was that?, still during the war?

MDK: No, it was after the war.

EH: You never saw your photograph on the Saturday Evening Post...

MDK: No...

EH: ... until after the war?, weren't you curious?

MDK: Well, I guess yeah, I suppose I was... a young girl, I didn't pay much attention.

EH: So did people in your town see it and said 'Mary, I saw you on the cover of the Saturday Evening Post?'

MDK: Oh, that's when I started to wonder what was all about.

EH: Did other people in town know that you had posed for the picture?

MDK: Oh, yes, yeah, small town, they know, but actually the whole... but after it came out on the Saturday Post.

EH: And what did you think of that experience?, that must have been exciting for a young girl.

MDK: I didn't think much about it as a young girl, it didn't bother me, really (risas), until later when people started, you know, talking about it it went big and everything but at the time just felt, it was nice to, to be able to sit for Norman Rockwell and uh, you know, 'cus he became very famous and so when I realized that, that it was quite a thing to sit there for him.

EH: Did he payed you to model?

MDK: Yes, I went down twice, I changed the blouse and got five dollars a sitting.

EH: So you got a total of ten dollars at the end for the experience?

MDK: Ten dollars, that what was he was giving all the people, five dollars.

EH: What your mother think of you sitting for Norman Rockwell?

MDK: Oh, she was very pleased, yeah.

EH: Now, I understand that other members of your family you said sat for him for other paintings.

MDK: An uncle of mine sat for all Four Freedoms.

EH: Did Norman Rockwell discussed with you at all why he chose the symbol of Rosie the Riveter?

MDK: No, not really, he did mention it that he had an idea about, you know, of the blue [no claro] and I didn't see the rivet machine until it came out in the cover, I didn't have to see that or anything, he did those things afterwards, he had an idea so, I sat there and he painted what he wanted.

EH: So, now, where you actually a riveter?

MDK: No.

EH: And have you seen a rivet gun?

MDK: Ah, yes, I was at the... I was... Jay Leno's program and he had one, a very light one and, and he got me sit with that.

EH: What did you actually do for work during the war?, did you stayed working at the telephone company thruought the war?

MDK: Yes, yeah, and the I went on to school, I waited until my brother go out fo the service and my sister was with her husband who was in the service. When they came back, I went out to school.

EH: Now, your brother was in the service?

MDK: Yes, yeah.

EH: What branch of the service was he in?

MDK: He was navy.

EH: And did you know where he was stationed?

MDK: No, I can't remember.

EH: What, what feedback did you get from your brother during the war?, what were you hearing as a civilian?, you never actually left your town in Arlington?

MDK: No, I didn't leave, I was there but...

EH: Throughout the war, what were you hearing back on the home front from your brother and neighbours and other residents?

MDK: He was, his wife to be, his fiancée at that time, they had before they had before he left, sign of, kind of a cold set up, so when she get letters from him, she would come over to try to figure out where he was at that time, so when he never came back, we didn't see him again till the end of the war, he was, he was gone the whole time.

EH: Did you hear the news of the war being at the telephone office?

MDK: Oh, yes, and in the papers and stuff, we, we knew, trying to keep up with that.

EH: So, now, your said there were some other things that you were involved during the war, giving blood and netting?, what else?

MDK: We, on the blood... Mary Rockwell took four of us, there who sat for Norman Rockwell, and we, we drove to Troy, New York to give blood that was sent directly across and that's one of the things we felt was helping, so that and whatever you can do.

EH: What sacrifices did you make on the home front to support the war effort?

MDK: Well, mostly my mother because, you know, the, the food situation, the sugar, you didn't get butter and gasoline was very scarce, you could only get so much gas at the time.

EH: What other things?

MDK: Pardon me?

EH: What other things?, can you recall what any other things that you had to do without that changed your lifestyle?

MDK: That was about it, you didn't do too much in a small town.

EH: Now, at the telephone company, what were you doing?

MDK: I was a telephone operator and I just helped, my mother was... just one board operate

so there was just one person at the time working so it was my mother and I at the time.

EH: And then you said you went out to school, what did you do for schooling?

MDK: I went to Dylan [no claro] School on Temple University.

EH: Do you recall the year you went?

MDK: Forty...

EH: Was it after the war?

MDK: Yeah...

EH: Was after the war ended?

MDK: Right after the war.

EH: And what were you studying for?

MDK: Dental hygiene

EH: And did you graduate from Dylan?, as a dental hygienist?, did you live there while you were on school?

MDK: Yes, at the school at Temple, yeah.

EH: And then when you graduated, did you returned to Arlington?

MDK: Yes, I did, yeah and worked for a dentist in Edington.

EH: How long did you worked for him?

MDK: Two or three years, then I got married.

EH: And then what did you do?

MDK: After I got married, I went to, with my husband to [no claro] he was on the shoe business, so we lived on [no claro] for a long time.

EH: And I know you had at least one child because Mary Ellen's here now, do have other children?

MDK: Yeah, I have one other girl and two boys.

EH: During the war, can you tell me what a typical day would be like in your life?

MDK: When I was...

EH: When you were living in the small town of Arlington with your family?

MDK: With my mother, yeah...

EH: So what a typical day be like for you?

MDK: Well, first I was in high school and then, and also part time in the telephone office, so then, typical day was working and just doing things around the house. There weren't too many things we could do, we, we didn't have, we didn't have movie theaters in Arlington and of

course with the gas situation we could only go once in a while into Bedington to do things, so we just, our friends, we got together and, and evening meeting and things like that for the war.

EH: What did people do to entertain themselves?

MDK: Well, we have different things like church suppers and dances and the green, that was about it... there wasn't too much to do.

EH: Do you recall particularly humorous or unusual events that occurred?

MDK: Well, I can't think of too many right now.

EH: Did you keep a personal diary?

MDK: Some bit yes.

EH: Do you remember hearing about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

MDK: Oh, yes.

EH: Where were you at the time?

MDK: I was in Arlington

EH: And you recall the experience?, what it was like to hear the news?

MDK: Yes, my husband was fri... knew General Sweeney who was in the plane that dropped the bomb and so we knew about it from that... my husband and I.

EH: Now, where you married at that time?

MDK: Yes, yeah.

EH: And was your husband at the service then or was he out of the service?

MDK: He was out of the service by then.

EH: What was your feeling at the bomb?

MDK: It was, it was a sad thing to see, so many people, you know, killed but it did helped our boys, I know one of the boys from Arlington was at London at the time and they where getting ready to, to come, to go further on, I forgot the word but when they got the word so they were able to come back here.

EH: Do you recall the day the war ended?

MDK: Yes, yeah.

EH: Can you describe where you were, what you were doing?

MDK: Not really too much, we were just thankful it was over, that's for sure but we didn't do too much about it.

EH: Were they celebrating in the town, anything like that?

MDK: No, they didn't, no, we just, ourselves.

EH: What it was like in the small town of Arlington after the war when the soldiers start coming home?

MDK: It was, it was great, you know, to see them and they were happy to be there, so it didn't changed too much, 'cus they weren't too many boy that came back and they didn't lose any from Arlington which was good, so...

EH: Wow, that is good. Uh, back to Rosie the riveter, the famous portrait from Norman Rockwell. Was everybody in your town aware that you had posed for that, that you were famous and you were on the cover of the Saturday Evening Post?

MDK: I don't think, thought too much about it being famous at the time, no, actually it was after the painting during the war and the Four Freedoms went to help around get bonds and to sell and that was actually when he, Norman Rockwell got more famous and people knew about him much more.

EH: Now, Rosie the riveter travelled all across the country to raise money for bonds?

MDK: Yeah.

EH: So then, you were famous throughout the country. Did anybody contact you about your portrait?

MDK: At that time no, no.

EH: When was the first time somebody contacted you to find out how the real Rosie was like?

MDK: I think it was when Stockbridge, in Stockbridge, then museum, they started getting in touch with me and they wanted me to come and talk, you know to the people and they had a, it was a celebration, Norman Rockwell's so many years or something, they invited my whole family there for the weekend and his son, oldest son Peter was like the comentator and he, they had been in different parts of the country and ended up back in Stockbridge Museum for celebrating so many years of Norman Rockwell.

EH: When the Rockwells left Arlington, did you stayed in touch with them at all?

MDK: No, I... I went out to school and so I never di, hear from, it was surely after that Mrs. Rockwell, Mary Rockwell was sick and so she was down in Stockbridge at this place enough of the time, great deal of the time so he was going back and forth, they had the boys in school, so he felt that he should be down there so that's when he sold the place in Arlington and moved to Stockbridge.

EH: How did sitting for Norman Rockwell affect your life?

MDK: Well, you know, after it came out and everytime you went some place, somebody would

recognize who I was and, it was a lot of talk and, about it.

EH: Now, I understand that your children used the topic for show and tell at school?

MDK: Oh, yes, yeah.

EH: That you were famous. What did they do, did they bring you in or bring a photograph at?

MDK: Pardon me?

EH: Did they bring you in to school as their show and tell or did they bring photographs?

MDK: The photographs, yeah, different things... no, I didn't go.

EH: Did Norman Rockwell ever explained or tell you why he made you so much bigger in the photograph than you were in real life?

MDK: No, he just had the idea what he wanted and for some, you know, picked me...

EH: Gave you a lot of muscles

MDK: Yeah, right, I didn't at the time but...

EH: Now, I understand as a young woman you were quite beautiful, that I... I think I remember reading something about Norman Rockwell saying that. You recall that?

MDK: I have, I have this, a letter form him.

EH: You have a letter from Norman Rockwell?

MDK: If you wanna see it.

EH: Yes, I would like to. Mary, we were talking about how your children used you as a subject of show and tell and I understand that, because of that and the kids were asking for things you had contacted Norman Rockwell and he wrote you a letter in 1967...

MDK: That's right, yes.

EH: Would you read that letter?

MDK: (leyendo) Dear Mary Doyle Keefe. Thanks for your note bringing back the past. I knew you took a lot of ribbing when I painted the picture and only whised I had some copy I could send to you but to be honest I just haven't. As to the original of the picture you passed for I have no idea where it is now. The kidding you took out of the picture was on my fault because I really thought you were the most beautiful woman I've ever seen but then I did have to make you into sort of a giant. Please give my very best to your children and to your husband. Cordially, Norman Rockwell.

EH: Thank you. So... so, now, he did not know what happened to that original photograph. Can you tell me a little bit of the history of that?

MDK: It was in the, actually, a plant that made the rivet machines and the man that baughted

it some time, had it right in the entry way as you came in, he had it hang in there and, so I, I don't recall... but anyway, a woman bought it for him, payed quite a bit, I don't remember what they said, so she had it for quite some time. Then, also then, this other one bought it, no, the other woman, she sold it, then sold the [no claro] for the auction place for sell and we went down, my husband and I, as to go down for the auction and that's when it was sold for 3.5 million dollars.

EH: Holy cow, would you have bet on it?

MDK: (risas) It went in the two seconds, it was, you know, we went into watch it and the hands went up and this, that, it was sold.

EH: That must have been quite an experience for you. How did you feel seeing yourself up there, selling for millions of dollars?

MDK: That's right, it was something.

EH: Did people around you know who you were?

MDK: Yes, because they had asked different people, photographers in, reporters in, and there was one, one, two from London, England there and several, you know, Connecticut and Massachusetts and they all took [no claro] coming up to ask me questions and that went on in the morning, and then later on, they would go into the auction.

EH: And you know what happened to the portrait after it sold in Sotherby's auction?

MDK: They went to Colorado, so then... before that we knew more about it but after my... out there, I don't know much about it.

EH: Now, I know off camera, you have mentioned the fire or that somebody thought it was in a fire, what was that about?

MDK: He had, when he was living in Arlington, they have build a studio there for him and one day burnt to the ground and he lost a lot of paintings and Norman Rockwell thought that Rosie one was in that but then we found out later it wasn't.

EH: Now, have you seen the original photograph of Rosie the riveter since Sotherby's?

MDK: No, no I haven't seen it since.

EH: Have you ever seen an original cover of the Saturday Evening Post?

MDK: I have one, the whole...

EH: So you finally did get to see yourself?

MDK: Yes, yeah.

EH: And now, historically I understand that there were some other anniversary dates, on the

50th anniversary of, was it the painting of Rosie the riveter or the end of the war?

MDK: The war, yeah.

EH: What did you do?

MDK: Well, first of I was asked the Good Morning America, I was on a Sunday morning, so my daughters and I went down to New York for that and while we were there Jay Leno's woman called there and she said, asked if I could fly out, be on his program 'cus I was already in New York and so that's what we did.

EH: So you were on Good Morning America and Jay Leno?, have you been on any other television shows?

MDK: No, that was it.

EH: You have any other claim to fame?

MDK: No.

EH: And I understand there was an anniversary some kind in Stockbridge that you participate in?

MDK: Yes, they, Peter Rockwell, that's his oldest son, he and his wife live in Paris, he's sculptor, an sculptor and they were over here and they went different places, different parts of the country, Chicago, New York and ended up in Stockbridge at the end of it, that's when they had the big celebration, it was just...

EH: This was around 2000, you said?

MDK: About that, yeah.

EH: And what was like that celebration like?

MDK: When they called and asked if I could, you know, come for the weekend, it was gonna be there and asked my whole family could come and for the weekend and it was just celebrate the picture of the painting of, of Rosie and actually as you got to the, to Stockbridge, at the museum they had a huge big picture of the Rosie, a banner-like out as you walked in, so, in the parade they had every, all the different ones dresses as Rosie as we went along in the parade.

EH: So in the parade, were you dressed as Rosie?

MDK: No, my husband and I sat in the car but, it was a nice weekend.

EH: Now, was the original portrait there for that anniversary?

MDK: No.

EH: What are the things that they do in that anniversary, 'cos there was a whole weekend

affair?

MDK: They had the parade and, they had a big tent and they had the cocktail party and dinner, so that went on whole day.

EH: Now, have you been in touch with the Rockwell's at all, see them?

MDK: No, I haven't, no.

EH: Can you remember any other memorable experiences from during the war time or anything related to your role as Rosie the riveter after the war?

MDK: Actually, I... I've been in touch with two of the boys Peter and another one, can't remember his name but, and talk to them and of course they went to school in Arlington so we talk about that.

EH: Now, did your children know Norman Rockwell's children?

MDK: Oh, yes, yeah.

EH: Now, there was a party in Stockbridge while you were there?

MDK: That whole weekend, they had the parade and everything and Peter Rockwell talked, he was like [no claro] to the people before the affair and, uh, that night and talked about his father and his work, so, that was nice.

EH: Now, Mary, you have said that your uncle served as a model for Rockwell on the 'Four Freedoms', was he a model for all 'Four Freedoms'?

MDK: Yes.

EH: What can you tell me about that?

MDK: Actually, he was in one of the... his whole, in the others was like his face and different parts, looking, one he was looking standing with his supposedly wife looking at the baby, young child, that was one, the other one was 'Freedom of the Worship' and it was different people from Arlington but his part was in all of them.

EH: What was his name?

MDK: James Martin.

EH: Can you spell that last name?

MDK: M-a-r-t-i-n, Martin.

EH: Now, why was he chosen, you know why Norman Rockwell choose him for 'Four Freedoms'?

MDK: Because he was, he did all the, a great deal of work for them because when his studio burned, he was the one that worked and the people, had the men working for them and they

constructed the studio again and he also when he, Norman, when they first came up there, they bought this beautiful farm right near the, the river, he did, he did a lot of work in the house, reconstructing different parts of it and remodeling. So, he, Norman Rockwell, just see somebody and he got the idea and he just asked you, that's the way he worked.

EH: Is there anything else that you like to add that we haven't covered?

MDK: I can't think of.

EH: Well, I would like to thank you for your interview and now we will just talk to your daughter Mary Ellen for a couple of minutes and see what it was like for the daughter of Rosie the Riveter.

MDK: Thank you

Transcripción No. 3

Sarah Craig

Civil-Remachadora

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.21257/>

Fecha de la entrevista: No especificado

Duración: 16 min.

Nombre: Sarah 'Sally' J. Davies Craig

Lugar de nacimiento: Lebanon, Oregon, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Cleveland, Oregon, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Blanca

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Civil

Fecha de servicio: 1942-1943

Ubicación de servicio: Cleveland, Ohio, Estados Unidos

Prisionera de guerra: No

Nota: Trabajó como remachadora en una planta de aviones Boeing durante la WWII.

Entrevistador: Gary Rhay

Colaborador: Denver Collins

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: Timeless Media Group

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/21257

Sujetos:

Craig, Sarah J.

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

Citado como:

Sarah J. Craig Collection

(AFC/2001/001/21257), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistador Gary Rhay: Ok, so, first thing we're gonna do is tell us your name, please and spell your last name, of course.

Sarah Craig: My name is Sarah Craig. C-R-A-I-G but I go by Sally, everyone knows me as Sally.

GR: Ok, well, Sally, can you tell us where you were when WWII started and what you were doing?

SC: I was living in New Jersey, Kearny, New Jersey and I had a little baby, she was just born a few months when the war broke out and that's where we were living when the war broke out.

GR: What you remember about Pearl Harbor and that day?

SC: Well, I do remember that day very well because I was at my sister in law's for dinner and it came over, radio newsflash, 'Pearl Harbor was bombed' and oh, my, everybody was nervous and excited, it was a very rough day for everyone.

GR: Then President Roosevelt addressed the nation on radio the following day...

SC: That's right.

GR: Did you hear that speech?

SC: Yes, I did.

GR: What did you think about that?

SC: Was wonderful, as he always is, he was a good president.

GR: Ok, how did the war affect you guys?

SC: Well, it made quite a change in our lives because my husband joined the United States Maritime Commission and we had to go from place to place to every shipyard during the whole war, during the war and he would go ahead of us and my daughter and I would get on a train with all the soldiers and we would join him but the soldiers were very nice to us, they treat us very nice, took care of us.

GR: Did you have to worry about rationing?

SC: Oh, yes, oh my yes! I could tell you a story about rationing. We were in Toulouse Minnesota and we were traveling New Orleans, Louisiana and we didn't

have tires because we couldn't get tires and we had couple blow us that way to and we were driving Chicago, I was ready to go back to New Jersey but we went on.

GR: What kind of things did were rationed?, what kind of problems were with it?

SC: Well, gas was rationed, tires were rationed, food was rationed, most everything was rationed.

GR: How about things like war bonds or metal dries and stuff like that that you have any of those kinds of things?

SC: I had war bonds, yes.

GR: Well, tell me about how did you end up getting involved in this operation?, how did you come by the Rosie the Riveter...?

SC: Well, we were in Clinton, Ohio, that was where we very first stopped with the Maritime Commission and I was living upstairs from an elder lady lived downstairs, Mary and she said, we were talking one day and she said, 'Sally, how would you like to go to work?', I said, 'I'm very lonesome here so I would be nice I think to go to work', she said, 'Well, the bomber plant is hiring', so she said, 'I'll be glad to take care of your little girl, if you would like to', and she was very nice lady and I could trust her so I went to the bomber plant and got the job.

GR: Was that hard to do or easy?

SC: It was hard work but it was nice, it was good work, give a little bit.

GR: How easy was to get the job?

SC: Easy (risas), very easy because they needed us, we were very much needed and no trouble getting the job, one interview and that was it.

GR: What kind of things did they had you doing and what kind of training?

SC: Well, first I was a bumper, a bumper holds the material for the riveter to rivet and then they changed me to be a riveter and I riveted parts of the bomber planes.

GR: What kind of plane was that?

SC: Bombers, the bombers, they called them 'bombers', you know, for the Army.

GR: Ok.

SC: Boeing Company.

GR: Well, tell me about what a riveter does?

SC: Rivets! (risas)

GR: How did you do that?

SC: Well, you have a gun, and you just brrr the thing.

GR: You talked about how well the soldiers treated you and things like that. How were you treated by the men of the plant?

SC: Very nice, I had no trouble at all, of course I was young at that time (risas), that helped (risas)

GR: Yeah! That could work both ways.

SC: That's right (risas)

GR: Well, tell me a little bit about the breaks and the schedule of the plant, where did you eat and those kinds of things?

SC: Well, I brought my lunch. I don't remember them having a cafeteria but they could because that was such a long time ago I don't remember that but I remember bringing my lunch and I worked eight hours sometimes longer if I was needed, you know.

GR: And so, you went to work because you were lonely.

SC: Yes, that's why I went to work.

GR: Did you wanna continue to work?

SC: Oh, after I came back to, after the war was over, I went back to New Jersey, I worked the rest of my life, I think that got me started.

GR: You think the war changed the way women in America were treated in terms of employment and things like that?

SC: I think so.

GR: How do you think that changed things?

SC: Well, I think that the women that worked during the war, I think they got, they liked the idea of working and have some money also and they decided, well, after the war is over you'll just continue working, that's the way I felt anyway.

GR: Ok, how about your little girl?, how that turned out?

SC: Oh, she was fine, when I moved back to New Jersey my mother lived across the street, just threw her to mom's house and mom took care of her (risas), she was a good grandmother.

GR: Well, now, with your husband leaving around the Maritime Commission that must have been a little hard to stay at the plant...

SC: Oh, that was the only place I worked during the war, was the bomber plant, after we moved down to other areas, you know, I didn't worked there any longer.

GR: How long did you worked in the bomber plant?

SC: I'd say about eight months.

GR: How many women do you think were working?

SC: Oh, I don't know (risas)

GR: Well, not in numbers, how about a percentage like 25% of the...?

SC: Yeah, at least 25%, maybe more.

GR: You think that they did their first share...?

SC: Oh, absolutely, I think we all did our first share, I think so.

GR: I'm thinking about the war in general, did you feel like your work in the bomber plant was contributing to that?

SC: Yes, yes I did.

GR: You know, keeping you...

SC: Yeah, I thought I was contributing to the war, 'cus the men were all gone to war and that's, during that war many men left the work so we had to do it.

GR: And how about the news about the war?, you guys get a lot of news or knew what was going on?

SC: Oh, yeah, we were informed.

GR: How did you get the news?

SC: Television, we had television and radio, radio especially, only the rich had television, though (risas) but we had our radios and newspapers.

GR: And I guess President Roosevelt would often give talks to the country.

SC: Yes, he would, Fireside Chats.

GR: How were those?

SC: Wonderful.

GR: Any of them stand out in your mind?

SC: No, not really, it's been too long ago.

GR: Sure. The other day almost everybody remembers about WWII other than Pearl Harbor is when they find out President Roosevelt who died, do you recall that?

SC: Yes.

GR: Tell us a little bit about that day and how you felt about that.

SC: Well, we were all sad about his death because he, I think everyone admired him.

GR: Did you know how Harry Truman was before? (risas)

SC: (risas) Of course I knew who Harry Truman was, yeah!

GR: A lot of people said 'Who the heck is Harry Truman!?'

SC: (risas) No, I knew who he was.

GR: Then there's the atomic bomb at the end of the war, what do you remember about that?

SC: I can't remember too much about it.

GR: You were just glad it was over.

SC: Yes, we were all glad that was over.

GR: Well, one of the things war seems to have done for you is take a girl from New Jersey and show her the whole United States.

SC: That's right.

GR: How was that experience?

SC: We were in what we called the Great Lakes Area, we all worked in the Great Lakes Area, you know all the shipyards of the Great Lakes Area, that was kind of an experience, it really was. [no claro] that my daughter was older when we were traveling, first she could, remember all these wonderful, you know, different cities

we've lived in, we liked some of them and we didn't liked some, you know (risas), yeah.

GR: You mentioned New Orleans at one point.

SC: Yeah, I was in New Orleans.

GR: I'm not good at geography sometimes but I know New Orleans is not in the Great Lakes.

SC: No, it was called the Walbutler* Shipyards and it was part of the Great Lakes Area.

GR: Really?

SC: You know, the area that we covered.

GR: So, way from the Great Lakes all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico.

SC: That's right.

GR: What kind of things were they built on those shipyards?

SC: (risas) Now you got me, I wish I had pictures to show you then you could tell me what they are, I don't remember what they were.

GR: I can tell you some of some off top my head and it would be landing ship tanks or LSTs

SC: Tankers

GR: And pan tankers and Liberty Ships...

SC: Yeah, Liberty Ships, that's where my husband mostly worked on, Liberty Ships, just came back to me now.

GR: And what was your husband's role?

SC: He was a chief hall inspector; he would go from shipyard to shipyard inspecting the halls of the ships, to make sure everything was ok.

GR: As fast as they were making them, he was probably very busy?

SC: He was busy (risas)

GR: Well, let's go back to the bomber plant for a minute, what else can you tell us about the bomber plant, what....?

SC: It was very very large and the planes were very very large, you know, bombers are very large and you know I just remembered when I walked in there I was, 'ohh, boy there!', so big, you know but I don't remember enough of [no claro] about how it looked like, except all the planes were in a great big area.

GR: And they kind of take them from place to place or did they stay in one place?

SC: They stayed in one place until they were completed and then they were, you know, moved them out to the war.

GR: How, you know, today with all the talk about security and things, how was security like at the bomber plant?, how easy was to go in and out?

SC: Well, we had to have our passes, you know, stickers were our passes.

GR: Ok. Did you... how was the pay?, how did you do for pay?

SC: Well, you know, I don't remember my pay but one of our ladies at the last meeting I was at, her pay was 32 dollars for one week, for the week so I imagine mine was about the same because she was a riveter.

GR: So 32 dollars a week was pretty good in 194...

SC: That's right, that's right.

GR: Ok, well if you could take the whole experience that occurred you during WWII and kind of sum it up, how would you sum that up for somebody?, if you were gonna tell your granddaughter today, I mean your grandson, how would you go back telling them about what the war did to the country, to you or for you?

SC: Well, I think it changed, changed all of us, I think we got, we became more aware of the country and being 'American' doing, doing you know, our best to the help United States, I think it helped most of us do that. As war is very devastating and it does, especially when you are involved which I was not really involved, my husband was not in the service, you know, he was not in the war but it does make you conscious of what you should do as an American.

GR: I need some help on the mike... Technology is wonderful... Ok, so overall you think it was a pretty positive experience for...

SC: Yes, it was a positive experience.

GR: And if you were to have to tell your grandson, who's gonna see this, just pretend you're talking to your grandson now. List for me the positive things that this experience did for you.

SC: Oh, I don't know, well, I think just working and knowing you were working for the war, it was a positive thing to think you were helping out and helping the people that were during, in the war, trying to make those bombers safer for them to fly, you know, things like that.

GR: Ok. Is there anything you wanna tell you family that, just for posterity's sake?, for them to have for you if impossible happens, when you eventually lined up leaving this life, something you wanna tell them that will stay on this tape?

SC: Well, I just hope and pray that everybody lives, you know, to be a good American and do their part, now and more too, you know and we just hope everybody supports our soldiers and our men that are fighting for us.

GR: Ok.

SC: Ok?

GR: Yeah, that will work.

SC: Thank you.

Transcripción No. 4

Leonora Whildin

Cadet Corpse Nurse

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.57711/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Junio 13, 2006

Duración: 80 min.

Nombre: Leonora Porreca Whildin

Lugar de nacimiento: Boston, Massachusetts, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Nueva Jersey, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Blanca

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fecha de servicio: 1943-1948

Rama del servicio: Cadet Nurse Corps

Ubicación de servicio: Boston City Hospital; Ciudad de Nueva York; Bremerhaven, Alemania; Morristown, Nueva Jersey.

Prisionera de guerra: No

Nota: Antes de unirse a las Cadet Nurse Corps, también trabajó durante seis meses en una pequeña tienda de interruptores ubicada cerca del Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), fabricando interruptores para el esfuerzo de guerra.

Entrevistadora: Ann Kelsey

Entrevistador: Michael O'Hagan

Colaboradora: Ann Kelsey

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: County College of Morris, Learning Resource Center

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/57711

Sujetos:

Whildin, Leonora

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

United States. Cadet Nurse Corps.

Citado como:

Leonora Whildin Collection
(AFC/2001/001/57711), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library
of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistadora Ann Kelsey: It's Tuesday, June 13, 2006. Leonora Whildin, whose birth date is December 7, 1926, is being interviewed at the County College of Morris, Learning Resource Center, Randolph, New Jersey, by Ann Kelsey, Associate Director, LRC. Michael O 'Hagan, Media Producer, LRC, is filming the interview. When and where were you born and raised?

Leonora Whildin: I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and I lived in East Boston. And then my college years, my mother and I lived in the Back Bay, the Fenway Section.

AK: What did your parents do for a living?

LW: My father was a barber. My mother had six children. I'm the youngest of six. She was home, naturally, caring for children. And then when the Depression came, she went to work in a chocolate factory.

AK: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

LW: I have two brothers. Well, one is now dead. And four sisters, and one of my sisters is dead. She was in the army, by the way, for a time.

AK: Did any other family members live with you-- grandparents or other relatives?

LW: No, I never knew any of my grandparents. My father's father had died in Italy, and his mother died in Italy in 1938. I never met them. My mother's mother died in New York in 1902. Her father died shortly before I was born, so I never knew him, but she did have a stepmother, and I remember her vaguely.

AK: Describe to me the neighborhood that you lived in when you were growing up.

LW: Well, East Boston was still an island, and I can remember when the Sumner Tunnel was being built. I was about nine years old, and I used to go down and watch them, and wonder how they could get under the water and stay dry. And the area was pretty self-contained, in a sense, because we still took a ferry to Boston. They did have a bridge to Lynn, and I can remember as a child, and as my parents'

grandchildren came along, we used to have a little.... You know, it was post-Depression, or during the Depression, really, and money wasn't available, and the children didn't have the toys they have now. And so to entertain the children, they'd put them on their knees and sing, "Ride, Ride, to Boston. Ride, Ride to Lynn. Watch out little girlie, you might fall in!" because bridges were, you know, before engineering know-how was too well known. Then there was a drawbridge to Chelsea. They used to have some barges or bigger boats come in, and they'd lift the bridge, because the mast wouldn't go under the bridge. And there weren't the oil tanks that are there now. The airport wasn't built. They just had a small landing field. But what they did have, that kept the people in the area employed was a huge General Electric factory that made light bulbs. But we did have a beautiful park area and a swim beach. It had hills, and we could ski there, but you had to walk up yourself, or herringbone your way up the mountain. It wasn't really a mountain, but as a child, it looked like one to me. That area, during World War II, that was called Wood Island Park. That area, during World War II, was leveled. The fill [dirt from the hill] went to expand the airport. And barracks, troops, were there during World War II. I wasn't there at the time; I was in Boston at Boston City Hospital. But the neighborhood was very stable because if people did move as their rental needs grew-- not too many owned the homes. They called them flats, which were larger than most apartments. But they would move within the island, so the families knew each other, and the teachers knew the families. So by the time I got along, they all knew my brothers and sisters.

AK: Was there any particular ethnic group or groups that lived in the neighborhood?

LW: There were a lot of Jewish people that settled there. There's a Jewish cemetery there, which is one of the few that are there. There were Irish and Italian, and we had some Eastern-- you know, the Syrians had to leave at the time, so it was pretty diverse. There were just a couple of Oriental or Asian, and a couple of black people. For the age, it was diverse, but it was overwhelmingly white, until World War II, and then they had the Negro barracks there.

AK: Describe the schools that you attended-- the elementary school, the high school.

LW: Well, I'm one of the few that went to a daycare center, because my mother was working full time, and I was the only one that wasn't in school full time. So I was given a quarter for my lunch money. And I was at the nursery school all day. I had lunch, and then they had a rest period for the children. My first kindergarten school was in a clapboard house. It was called the Shelby Street School. It's now gone, but it was a one-room kindergarten, wooden floors and a clapboard house. It was on the same land as the grade schools, and the grade schools were one to six at that time. And even in Boston they had an entrance for boys and an entrance for girls, because I guess they kept the toilet facilities separately. We had cloak rooms. Most people wouldn't know what they were, but they were cloak rooms and we had hooks where we.... Because we had to walk to school, so the clothing was heavy. Most of the time you were within walking distance, so you went home for lunch and back to school. It was good exercise.

AK: What about your high school?

LW: My high school, I was younger than most. I went from the first grade to the third grade. I remember going to be tested, so at that time they did allow students to skip. So I did, I went from first grade to third. I was given some books to read over the summer, which was nothing new for me, I liked to read, and I could read pretty well. My high school, I was younger than most. I was thirteen, and my sister was working at Hood Rubber Company during the war, and she had a baby. She had a child at nineteen, and she was divorced then. So after school I took care of her daughter. So I didn't have much of a social life as a young girl. When I was younger, I was the youngest, and I was at nursery school most of the time, so I didn't have too many playmates. I did, for a while, when I went to the first grade school. In my sixth grade, oddly enough, the school I went to was the Patrick J. Kennedy School. The name is still there on the school-- whether it's used as a school or not, I don't know. But I was only there for one year, because we moved, and then I was at the Chapman School, which later became the Joseph P.

Kennedy School, when he was killed. And then I went to the high school. My high school, you wouldn't even know I was there. Even as a senior, I did go to the prom, but I didn't date in high school, so I wasn't too much interested. I didn't have time.

AK: What year did you graduate from high school?

LW: In 1943. And at that time we had-- one of the fellows left to go in the RAF [Royal Air Force] before the United States was involved in the war. He went to Canada and joined the RAF. Maybe it was Joseph Kennedy, I don't know, (risas) A lot of the boys, who were eighteen, went to war. They were given their degrees if they stayed 'til January, I guess.

AK: Did you want to go to college, did you think about going to college?

LW: Oh, yes. Yes, I did. And it was expected I would, because I think they were told that I could do it. I took the college program and I did get straight "A's" in chemistry and physics, which is a prerequisite usually. But I applied to.... At that time women only became nurses or teachers, and I knew I didn't want to work in an office. I was determined that I wouldn't do that. So I did apply. I didn't have enough money to go to college. Not many of us did, you know. We were just coming out of the Depression and everything. But I was offered a scholarship, so I did apply to Simmons, which was the only collegiate school of nursing at the time. And they thought I'd do better at a Catholic school, but I'd never been to a Catholic school in my life. So I was going to start at Boston University, and I had already.... After I had already applied to Boston City Hospital to become a nurse, and at that time you had to be eighteen, and I wasn't seventeen yet. So I did work. That's when I went to work for this small outfit making switches that was beside MIT. It was a little shop, very few of us in there.

AK: We're going to get to that in a few minutes. Okay, looking back at how you lived at that time in the thirties and early forties, how would you characterize your economic situation?

LW: I would call it-- and I think it's true-- genteel poverty, because we ironed sheets, we had tablecloths, we had a Sunday dinner in the dining room, and we had guests. But my older brothers and sisters had worked, so they had money. It's

amazing, in just a few years, the difference in outlooks. I am probably more frugal than any of them, because my first job after the babysitting was 2.50 an hour to 3.50 an hour. I thought, "Well, I can't spend more money than that in an hour, if that's all I earned." So I have lived very frugally. But my brothers and sisters became spendthrifts, and they're doing all right too.

AK: So you were too young to be accepted into nursing school when you graduated from high school.

LW: That's correct.

AK: And the war was on.

LW: Yeah. The Cadet Nurse Corps was my salvation, in a sense, because it got me into nursing a year sooner, and my applying before I was old enough was an asset, too, because they had all my papers. The government needed nurses, so they started another class at Boston City. They used to have only two classes a year, so they put in another class in December, and you had to be seventeen, but they took me because I was so close to seventeen, and had all the credentials.

AK: And this was December of '43?

LW: Yes.

AK: But before you'd been accepted into that class, what made you decide to go to work at....

LW: The little shop? Well, one of the gals I knew from high school had an opening, and she asked me if I'd be interested. It was in Cambridge, near MIT, and I said yes. She knew that I'd follow through on work and things, so it worked out pretty well. It wasn't advertised, so it helped. I don't know how successful I would have been, going out looking for a job, because I was still young and pretty immature for sixteen. But I had responsibility. I had learned responsibility at home, and responsibility for myself, so it helped.

AK: During that time period, do you remember seeing any slogans or posters or newsreels that encouraged women to go to work in the factories, or join the military?

LW: Yes. Well, they had posters all over the place. I think I saw the Cadet Nurse Corps one in a post office. They had on radio. Of course we didn't have television at that time, but the newsreels in the movies, the cuts, would have some recruitments. I didn't get to many movies, though-- I read about 'em.

AK: Did seeing this advertising have any effect on your wanting to go to work in a factory or join the Cadet Nurse Corps?

LW: I knew I had to earn money, because I couldn't afford to go to college. I did have a 200 dollars scholarship, which was, you know, one semester's worth at that time. But I'd need carfare and lunch money and so forth, so I knew I had to work in a job, and this one was a little better than working at F. W. Woolworth's. (risas)

AK: Did any of the rest of your family do war work?

LW: They all did, in a sense. Even my mother worked at that time, and she worked in what's now Haviland Chocolates. It was Miller and Hollis. And they used to make some of the candy for the servicemen. And my oldest brother had two children by that time. He worked, and then owned, a leather business. My other brother was a Seabee and served in the Pacific. My older sister was a WAC, she served in the army. The next sister was the one who worked at Hood Rubber and had the baby. She married a sailor after that, and still lived there. My sister next to me was in Washington, doing secretarial work. So we all did.... My father wasn't functioning at the time; he was sick, [no claro].

AK: Do you remember seeing any references to Rosie the Riveter then?

LW: Oh, yes! One of my classmates, one of the ones, she was a year ahead of me in school, but lived near me, so we were friends. We both enjoyed ice skating. She worked at the Boston Navy Yard, and she's smaller than I am, and she actually did riveting. And she wore the hoods. Then, women always had to wear pants. So Blanche stayed with the navy right through the end, and she married a sailor and moved to Michigan.

AK: When you were working, making the switches, did you think of yourself as a Rosie?

LW: No. I thought, "Well, I'm helping." I did have that feeling that it wasn't insignificant, but I didn't know exactly what it was. But I have to tell you it was the nicest group of people. It was very small, and everyone was on a first-name basis. I guess-- I don't know what his technical name would be-- but he designed and made the pieces-- we called him "Doc." When I left to go into nursing, they gave me a Waltham watch for a going-away gift.

AK: How many people actually worked in this shop?

LW: There were only about five to six women, two young boys, and two older men.

AK: Young boys too young to be in the service?

LW: Eighteen or nineteen or something. Their numbers hadn't been called probably. And they lived nearby. Or, I don't know, maybe there was a reason.

AK: Did you all have job titles?

LW: No. Just Nancy, my friend, she was an inspector, but that's all.

AK: Did you have on-the-job training where they showed you what to do?

LW: I don't think we needed it for what we did, because whenever we had a new batch of switches, we'd know we'd need so many rods and some spaces. So each switch would be a different size. I don't know. We did use a lathe and a drill press. When we first used those, we were shown and supervised doing a couple. The work had to be done, so.... I kind of think they looked for people that would follow through, and dependable.

AK: Was there shift work? Did you work shifts?

LW: Not there, we didn't, no.

AK: It was all essentially a day job, regular day hours?

LW: Yeah. I kind of think they probably did-- I don't know. It would probably be difficult to get people to work there at night, because it's not like Cambridge is now. One Hundred wasn't there, the beautiful buildings and apartment houses. There were tall concrete factories, so it would be dark at night. But our little shop was closer to the river and right by MIT, but the transportation, you'd have to go by subway, and you have to realize they'd have blackouts. That was one of the

reasons we had our high school graduation in the morning, because of the blackout.

AK: And where were you living when you worked in the shop?

LW: In East Boston.

AK: So you took the subway?

LW: Yes.

AK: You had to get over into Boston first, though, right?

LW: Well, they had the subways to Boston before the bridge, but the ferry was a penny and more fun. (risas) But the subways were there. The subways then, and I believe today, can take you to Walden Pond. You could travel anywhere by subway-- the same in New York, but it's harder now. They ran more often and they cost less money, and they were more efficient, really. I think it's the attitude of people. They feel that they had to earn their money, it wasn't a given.

AK: So were you assembling switches?

LW: Yes.

AK: You got the parts, the pieces, and you put them together?

LW: Yes.

AK: Do you know what these switches were used for?

LW: I don't know, but I know they were used for electrical connections, because they all had little holes to put wires through. And they were different sizes. So at that time computers used to be a full room, so they would use switches like these, but bombers would too.

AK: But they never actually told you?

LW: We didn't ask. "Don't ask, don't tell."

AK: "Loose lips sink ships."

LW: Right. That's another way of saying it.

AK: Working in this shop, do you think you were being paid better?-- well, you mentioned than working at Woolworth's.

LW: Well, let me tell you, my salary, it wasn't what the Rosie the Riveter's got, but I kind of think political clout has a lot to do with pays, even through the federal

government, because on that flyer I gave you, the salaries they mentioned for cadet nurses didn't match what I got. I would say I'd get about 30 dollars a week, which to me was a lot of money then. Of that, I would give my mother 15 dollars, because we had rent to pay. There was no one else in the house. And when I went to nursing, she had to give that up. And with the rest I had carfare, lunch money, and clothes.

AK: Did you wear uniforms, or anything to cover your clothes, or you just wore your normal clothes?

LW: Washable street clothes.

AK: Just regular street clothes. Did you think that the job you were doing was important?

LW: I think so. I don't know. You know, they used to do so much work for clearances during the war. I know when....

AK: You mean security clearance?

LW: Right. When I lived on Queensbury Street in the Back Bay, they used to come and ask about neighbors and things. So whether they did or not.... I kind of think-- at that time we all thought any job was important. So yes, I think it was important.

AK: The job that you were doing, before the war, was that normally done only by men?

LW: I believe so, yes. I guess, in a sense, it would be called like an unclean job, and women didn't do unclean jobs then. But it required forge work, and the lathes and the drill presses. I'm pretty sure.... The sit-down part, maybe they would have had some women do, but not too many. If they had women, they'd be in the office. Come to think of it, I don't know anybody-- I didn't meet any office women in that little shop. Isn't that interesting? You know, in terms of payrolls and things. That's surprising, because when I worked-- people will be shocked to know this-- when I worked at the five-and-ten, they used to give us one of those little manila envelopes with cash in it, for our pay.

AK: But you did get paid. Do you remember how you got paid?

LW: Yes.

AK: At the shop, did they give you a check?

LW: I believe so. They must have. It had a name, the company had a name.

AK: Do you remember the name?

LW: I saved almost every check I've earned as a nurse, but, you know, I didn't have access to a lot of the household stuff, because I was in nurses' training.

AK: Were any of the women that worked there supervisors? You mentioned one was an inspector.

LW: That was my friend. We were all the same level. I imagine she would get a little more money.

AK: Who was in charge?

LW: She was. She would mete out the work load and everything. So she, today, would be more of a manager than an inspector.

AK: And who was in charge of the whole operation, the entire company, do you know?

LW: I would think it would be Doc. I think he designed a lot of the.... They have a name for what he did, and I'm trying to think. It's an engineering term. And then one of the other men was a doctor, Ph.D.

AK: It was right next to MIT. (

LW: Yes.) Was it connected with MIT in any way? Did these men come from MIT?

LW: If they did, I don't know. At the time, there were Quonset huts at MIT where servicemen were. Actually, they were working on radar and the oscilloscopes, which are the.... But interesting enough, the one school tour I had in high school was to MIT: my physics class went to MIT. We got a lecture on the magnesium bomb. And I have the sketches I made. I never made one, though! (risas)

AK: So you lived at home all the time you were working in the shop?

LW: Yes.

AK: And then how did the war-- well, you were in high school when the war started.

LW: Yes, my fifteenth birthday was on December 7, 1941.

AK: I know, that's your birthday. When the war started, did that change things that you did? Did you have to do things differently? Like you mentioned the blackouts. Did it change your routine?

LW: Well, before December 7th there was a feeling on the coastal areas-- remember, I lived on the coast. We had blackouts. My sister was what they called a street warden, the one who became a WAC. So we had to keep the shades down, lights out. So it affected a lot of people. But I can remember I was ice skating with Blanche and they had a blackout. We couldn't walk the streets, so we stayed ice skating. It was a bright moonlit night, but I froze to death nearly. I think I got frostbitten on my toes that night, because we had to wait 'til the clearance to go home.

AK: So you had to stay where you were.

LW: Yeah. I was a junior in high school, because Blanche graduated the year before me. So it was significant, because I was supposed to be home before dark when I was in lower grades. So I didn't get chewed out on that one.

AK: All right, now, you had applied to the Cadet Nurse Corps, and then at what point did you find out that they were going to actually admit you into that program?

LW: I had applied to a school of nursing before I knew about the Cadet Nurse Corps. I think I have a letter in the papers I brought, saying to report and bring a urine specimen.

AK: And that was the end of '43?

LW: Yes. I had graduated in June, so for that short span I worked in the switch [factory].

AK: So when did you give your notice at the switch shop?

LW: It probably was.... They knew I was waiting to hear, so as soon as I heard that I was accepted and would have to start December 1st. I would imagine it was maybe even two weeks, if that. I'm wondering, you know, if my age delayed a decision or not.

AK: In terms of getting into the nursing program?

LW: Yeah.

AK: But they waived the rules to let you in earlier?

LW: Yeah. To fill the number of days, I was supposed to stay seven days longer than everybody else, but start with them so I wouldn't miss the orientation.

AK: Oh, because of your birth date being on the seventh.

LW: We followed all the rules.

AK: And that's when you turned seventeen?

LW: Right. So they got full graduate nurse services.

AK: Describe the training that you went through in nursing school.

LW: Well, they were tough times, but our first lecture was "doors swing both ways." So it was pretty rigid. The section that I started with started with twenty-five. We graduated thirteen of us. So you had to pass academically. You had to pass the physical demands, and you had to pass the sacrifice of a social life, because we lived in the nursing home, and the lights were out at ten the first six months. You had an enforced study, seven to nine. It was probably as stringent, if not more so, than a convent, (risas) You know, scrubbing floors was not unknown either. It took a lot of determination to stay with it. The thing that they had in our group that was unbeknownst to other nurses was we were taught some of the martial arts. Isn't that significant? Jujitsu, we called it. There was an aspect of genteelness with all this demand, because we had a choral group, and we had concerts, and every once in a while we'd have a dance and they'd invite the USO soldiers and sailors. Of course we lost a lot of nurses to marriage that way, too.

AK: At that point, if someone got married, they automatically had to leave the school?

LW: I believe so. They were so stringent, one of the gals who was in the second year and would have been a good nurse, wanted time off because her boyfriend was home on leave, and they wouldn't give her, so she left. She was never accepted back. You know, you couldn't have any indulgences, of sorts. But it was hard, because at that time, toward the end, in '46, some of the doctors who had been in the battlefield were back, and they still looked at me as a kid, because I was still young.

AK: When did you actually graduate from the nursing program-- before the war ended, or after?

LW: In 1946. I was in a three-year program. The Cadet Nurse Corps was two and a half years. The whole Class of 1946 had three sections, and I was in Section 3, the third class that was admitted in December. And that whole group was the Class of 1946.

AK: So the purpose of the Cadet Nurse Corps was to free up nurses who were already trained, that joined the military, is that right?

LW: That's right.

AK: Nurses that joined the military as military nurses, and the Cadet Nurse Corps took their places in the domestic hospitals?

LW: You have to realize that most of the large hospitals in cities were run by nurses, or had student nurses, because that kept the costs down. But those nurses went to war. And as student nurses, we had to be charge nurses lots of times, lots of times. And the load was tremendous, because people didn't go to doctors too much then. We had some wonderful family doctors that would see families at night, and even make home visits. But the majority of people went to the emergency room. In the wintertime, the beds were mainly all filled, and we had people on cots in the corridors at Boston. And I'm sure that was true in Bellevue [New York City] and in Cook County [Chicago], and all of the big city hospitals. So the Cadet Nurse Corps really carried the hospital load at that time. It worked. The government wanted to make sure the people got care so it did fulfill that job.

AK: So when the war ended, when V-E Day and V-J Day, you were in the middle of your training?

LW: I remember V-J Day very clearly, because I was, of all places, on Maternity. And my classmates knew....

AK: You were working on the maternity ward?

LW: Right. My classmates knew I was there, and they hollered up, and I went to the nursery window and they said, "We're going to Boston to celebrate!" And I said, "Bye bye!" So I took care of the mothers and babies.

AK: So when the war ended, and then the nurses who had been in the military, most of them probably were discharged-- was that the case? Did the women who had joined the military to be nurses, did they then come back to their old jobs?

LW: Not too many, because they were replaced. Some of the nurses who never left stayed there 'til they were incapacitated, I'm sure. But they became house mothers in the nurses' home. But some of them did come back. Where I met most of them was when I was at Boston University, because a lot of them came back for their degrees. And as they had the G.I. Bill, they were able to continue their degrees.

AK: So this was a very different scenario than what happened in the factories, where the men were discharged from the service and most of them came back and reclaimed their old jobs-- at least for a time period. And all the women who had gone to work in the factories were laid off.

LW: Right.

AK: But in the case of their situation, where women were replacing women, when the women came back, they didn't necessarily, and often did not reclaim their old jobs?

LW: No. But what they did was necessary, because there was a great transition in the education of nurses. The early nurses realized they were used for service, and they were. But they did get an education, but it wasn't consistent throughout the country. The big city hospitals had the other medical schools near. There weren't too many medical schools at the time. People fail to remember this. So that in the big cities they had a better education, and the requirements were higher, because they had to be, for safety reasons. So the nurses, having experienced all that, realized the unfairness of it. So they wanted to bring nurses up to a professional level, so they could have the salaries they earned and deserved. So it was not only that, but the whole shift of care, because during the war when they did physicals, they realized how little healthcare people had throughout the country. It was better in the cities, because we had a lot of caring people, and a lot of donations. But when you get to the plains and the sparse areas, there was a lot of neglect in dental care, mental care, physical care. So there was a need. We could appreciate

the times were changing, and had to. So in a sense, the nurses from the war probably helped contribute. And those of us who worked through the almost penal (risas) system of nursing, felt the need to be fair, and change it for the needs of all the people.

AK: So then a lot of these nurses, because then they were able to take advantage of the G.I. Bill, because they were veterans, they were able to go to a four-year nursing school.

LW: They didn't need to do four years-- neither did I. I did three, but I didn't need to. I got extra credits, because I was curious, (risas) One of them was an admiral, back for her degree. And some were captains. They started out as ensigns and lieutenants, but they had been in long enough to have a higher rank. And we sent out a lot of teachers to colleges and so forth.

AK: When did you graduate from the nursing program, what year?

LW: In 1946.

AK: And that was the Cadet Nurse Program?

LW: Yes.

AK: Then did you continue on?

LW: Yes. Well, you had to take boards. So I stayed at Boston City and I wound up as assistant head nurse. And then they had an emergency in Neurosurgery, and one of the doctors said, "You can do it." So I went in and scrubbed and they asked me to stay in the neurosurgical O.R., so I stayed there for a while. Then this job came up, they were looking for-- the government wanted someone to go overseas and help with the dependent children.

AK: Were these American children, or....

LW: That's a good question. I wasn't sure, (risas) Children are children.

AK: What year was this?

LW: This was in '47. By that time I had been at Boston City, right along. So I signed up. One of my classmates signed up with me, and at the last minute she backed out, and I stayed on.

AK: Who did you work for, that sent you overseas?

LW: The Department of the Army, U.S. government, Department of the Army.

AK: You were a civilian?

LW: Yes.

AK: You were a DAC, one of the army civilians?

LW: Yeah.

AK: So where did you go, and how did you get there?

LW: I was told to report to Chicopee Falls in Massachusetts. I was going to Germany, I knew that. I went from-- I guess it might have been Fort Devins, up to Newfoundland. And when I got to Newfoundland, they handed me a parachute.

AK: So you were on a plane?

LW: It wasn't just a plane, it was a C-54 transport plane. There were no seats. The parachute was my seat. Then we went from there-- the government's very loose about giving you information, you know. We had to work for a Freedom of Information Act. But anyway, from there we went to the Azores. Beautiful! What a beautiful country it was. I don't know now-- every country's crowded now. But we landed by radar. So MIT did its job. And from there I went to Paris in the night, and then to Frankfurt.

AK: And you flew? You were flying in a C-54 the whole way?

LW: The reason I mention this is, you have to remember, it was the beginning of the Berlin Airlift. So we had to (gestures with hands), instead of zooming right across.

AK: And how many hours did it take to make that trip?

LW: More than a day, almost two. Well, planes weren't that fast. It was dark when I got to Newfoundland, and then morning when I got to the Azores, night to Paris, and morning in Germany, so two days probably.

AK: How many people were on this flight?

LW: Maybe four.

AK: Four passengers, total, other than the crew.

LW: The pilot thought I was a dependent, (risas) I looked young at twenty-one. I've got my passport, you'll be able to see. When we went over Mont Saint Michel, he

said, "Why don't you come up and take a look? And I looked from the cockpit, down. It was a thrill for me. I think he thought I was a dependent, so that was all right.

AK: And the four passengers, were you all civilians?

LW: No. There was another couple, husband and wife, and one other person, an officer or something, hitching a ride back or something.

AK: So you finally arrived in Frankfurt, and then what did you do, what was your assignment?

LW: Who knows? I didn't know what to do. (risas) There was a Jeep there to take me to the station hospital. I got in the Jeep. I hoped that was the way. Fortunately.... I'm joking. There was a major, Major Myers was on the plane with me, and she....

AK: This was a woman?

LW: Yeah. When we landed in Frankfurt, she took me under her wing. Her husband was an officer there. So thank goodness for her! She saw me on a train to Bremerhaven from there.

AK: So your final destination was Bremerhaven?

LW: Right.

AK: Which was a port?

LW: It was the only submarine port that the Germans had-- the only port. It was very vital to them during the war. Look at what they did with it! They got the whole northern....

AK: And then what did you do when you got to Bremerhaven?

LW: There was someone in a Jeep that picked me up and took me to the hospital. Then I met the chief nurse. Her name was Goodale. And then I was like a fish out of water. The main compound was at the marine headquarters in Bremerhaven. So I would take the bus down to find out what I was to do. I kept working as a nurse at the hospital there.

AK: Was this a military hospital?

LW: It certainly was.

AK: An army hospital?

LW: It was an army hospital. One of the doctors there, I had known at Boston City, and his wife, so it was sort of not that strange to me-- but it was, in a sense, because the army nurses didn't know what to do with me, because I didn't have to take orders from them, (risas) The surgeon general came by, and everybody saluted him, and I shook his hand. They didn't like me in white, so I had some old army nurse's uniforms. No ranks or anything.

AK: Were you the only civilian nurse?

LW: There.

AK: In that hospital, you were the only civilian nurse?

LW: Yeah. Then another two came. But the other gal went to Belgium, because her brother was buried there. We didn't see much of each other.

AK: And you took care of children there?

LW: No! Soldiers.

AK: These were American wounded?

LW: Yeah.

AK: Or Allied wounded?

LW: American. They had others to come in. In any situation, any hospital, you don't deny care to people in need, or you shouldn't be in the business. I lived with a captain and a lieutenant. They had a room together. I had a room. And then there was another lieutenant that had a room. And then downstairs was the Red Cross.

AK: And Red Cross were these Clubmobile, recreation workers?

LW: Yeah.

AK: Was there a rec center there at the hospital for the soldiers?

LW: Yeah, they did letters, communications, and recreation and that sort of thing. But they were waiting to decide what to do with me. I used to go down to the marine.... Well, they had a library at the marine compound, so I would get books at the same time.

AK: Was there a librarian there?

LW: No. There probably was. Yeah, there'd have to be, because I'd take some books out.

AK: How long did you stay there?

LW: Not even six months. It didn't seem right to be in an army hospital and not, you know, have.... I could have been in the army, you know. It wasn't what I had planned on.

AK: So then did you resign there and come back?

LW: Uh-huh.

AK: Did they pay for your-- you had to pay your own.... Had you signed an agreement to work for a specified period of time?

LW: No, I don't think so. I signed an agreement to a job description that I didn't have. I did find out that the job I had applied for was given to a captain's wife, so that's why I resigned.

AK: But you had to pay your own fare?

LW: Right.

AK: Did you fly back, or did you take a ship back?

LW: I took a tramp steamer, because I couldn't afford the plane fare.

AK: And where did you land?

LW: New Orleans. The only touring I've done! People wonder why I don't want to travel, (risas) I'd wind up on a camel somewhere!

AK: How long did it take you to get from Germany to New Orleans on a steamer?

LW: I enjoyed that. I love the sea. Two days, maybe. I have it in a journal somewhere. I don't recall offhand. It was almost a week. Probably a week. Because I got into New Orleans in December and it was warm there, but when I got into New York, it was freezing cold and I had a summer suit on.

AK: And so that was 1948?

LW: Yes. And I didn't realize, but I was over in Germany during the Berlin Airlift. But I did notice they had a different edition of Time magazine in Europe during the war. You probably know that.

AK: So then what did you do after you got back to New York?

LW: I needed money, so I did go back to Boston City. We had routine checkups, you know, and they found I had a spot on my lung, and they looked at some earlier X-rays, and it was there, but it had grown. I had been back in Neurosurgery and scrubbed in Neurosurgery. So I wound up in a tuberculosis center-- I haven't discussed this too much-- for a year. I was twenty-three at the time. They didn't have any medications for tuberculosis at that time. It came out in the fifties, but I had what they call pneumothorax. They created a pneumothorax by compressing the lung. And to keep the lung compressed.... Well, I was on bed rest for a year, flat bed rest. And the next few years-- well, all the while I was at college, I used to go and have pneumothorax every two weeks, to check it.

AK: After that year that you had to stay in the hospital, then you went back to college?

LW: Yes.

AK: In Boston?

LW: Yes, at Boston City.

AK: And what were you studying?

LW: Nursing. I had a major in nursing and a minor in public health. And that's why I had more courses. I had about eight more credits than I needed.

AK: And when did you graduate?

LW: In 1954. I had first applied to Boston University before they had a school of nursing in '49. And I was taking two courses a week, when they found out I had tuberculosis. So I finished my degree.

AK: And then what did you do, after you got your degree?

LW: I did public health in Brooklyn.

AK: And then you moved to New York?

LW: Yes, because I was going to go to the maternity center to be a midwife. I was interested in maternity, pediatrics. I did very well on my state boards in pediatrics, so I thought it would be....

AK: Where along the way did you meet your husband?

LW: I met him when I was doing public health in Brooklyn. The gal who was to become my maid of honor, drove me to New York, and we had a little kitty for my friend's little girl. And Bill was there and had a little toy for [their daughter]. So that's how we met, and then he took my number.

AK: And then when did you get married?

LW: That was in-- '54-- in 1956 I was married.

AK: So not too long after you went to New York, you must have met him.

LW: Right. I was there for two years.

AK: All right, going back just briefly to when you were in Germany, what would you say was the most memorable thing that happened while you were working at that hospital when you were working with the soldiers? The most interesting story, the funniest story.

LW: Well, I told you when the surgeon general came by for inspection, and they all had to salute, and I just shook his hand and had to tell him I was a civilian. We did have a foreigner as a patient. This is where having been a civilian came in handy. I looked at him, and they had given him a spinal, but he was flat, but his color looked bad. So I said to the ward, "Let's turn him," because he was looking terrible]. He made out all right. They were right, on a spinal you shouldn't move 'em. But you don't let people have a straight spine and be dead, either. You have to make decisions. But they didn't scold me, because he was all right. They had a baseball team, the doctors there, and it was nice. Also, being a civilian, I didn't have to stay with all the officers, either, so I could go to some of the movies they had for the G.I.s. I enjoyed being with them.

AK: What kind of injuries? All different kinds of injuries, these soldiers that were waiting, that had to be stabilized before they were transported back to the States?

LW: No. See, this was '48, so most of those, hopefully, would have been cared for. But some of these were ordinary physical. But they had-- well, I hate to tell you, but this is true-- they had a separate ward for V.D. [venereal disease]. But they used to give penicillin-- and they still do some[times]-- but we had to save the urine,

because they would collect it and reclaim the penicillin from it. The Germans would do that.

AK: The Germans?

LW: Yes. But also, the times were terrible in Germany at that time. The shops were empty, and they had not much to eat. So most of the people that worked for Americans wanted goods instead of money. Money was no good to them. Cigarettes were a major bartering thing. But while I was there, they had a change in the scrip, and I was able to see a complete turnaround of the economy. They started to have bread in the markets and things. And that's the beginning of the Marshall Plan, I'm sure.

AK: So these were soldiers, basically, who were assigned to occupy Germany?

LW: Right.

AK: And they just had-- these weren't war wounded so much as just general illnesses that they would have?

LW: Right, that might have been overlooked in civilian life-- you know, some of them got better medical care than if they'd been home. And they always do have injuries. You know, if they have sports, you're bound to have some injuries.

AK: All right, so going back to Brooklyn now, let's see, you met your husband. Did you keep working after you got married?

LW: Yes, I stayed with the.... Well, we lived in Elmhurst, Queens, and Brooklyn was a long drive, so I was asked to teach at Helene Fuld's School in New York. So that was a shorter commute.

AK: And that was a nursing school?

LW: Yes. So I taught there until I became pregnant.

AK: And then did you stop working?

LW: No. No, I stayed working, but they said after six months you had to leave then.

AK: Did you go back and work after your baby was born?

LW: I couldn't, because I had no family nearby. But I did work on weekends when they'd just finished Elmhurst General. It was simply.. .it was awful, because the staffing was terrible. I'd work on weekends only, so....

AK: Was your husband a veteran?

LW: Yes. He went to Rensselaer. He was with, I think, the ASTP in the army, because he was at Maryland, you know, proving grounds and stuff.

AK: Aberdeen?

LW: Yeah. Then he went to a program at General Motors. Then he went to get his degree, too, under the G.I. Bill. And he had to take some courses at Lehigh. Then when there was an opening, he went to Troy. So he graduated from Rensselaer Polytech in chemical engineering. And then he went to work, which was Allied Signal. And that's how we wound up in East Aurora, New York. We moved from Elmhurst.

AK: He was going to school after you got married?

LW: Before.

AK: So he finished his schooling before [no claro].

LW: He finished his college in 1950. Then he was in Buffalo with Allied Signal, and then down to New York, had an office on Rector Street, and he worked there. Then when we were first married, we looked for a home in New Jersey because the rents were going up, and we needed the car, and we had two children. So we got a small house down in New Market.

AK: Where's New Market?

LW: It's between Plainfield and Bound Brook, in that area. It's part of Rutgers now-- yeah, Brunswick.

AK: Part of that....

LW: Johnson Park, I remember taking the children down there for play area. But he was able to get from our house in New Market, he could take the train into Hoboken, and the ferry, and walk to work, in less time than when we lived in Queens. So it was a good move at that time.

AK: You did a lot of different things during the war.

LW: Yes.

AK: All of the different jobs and work that you did, did that change your feelings about the nature of women's work, and what women could and couldn't do?

LW: Oh, indeed it did. I'm probably one of the few who had a working mother that wasn't a professional woman, but she, having four daughters, said, "You have to learn to do something, because you can't depend on a man anymore." And of course we all know that Prince Charming is a fairy story, and most men should welcome the change, because it takes the total burden off of them. But in some of it, I was.... My main interest was to make birthing a family affair. So in a sense, I think I've helped to do that, to give men the right to enjoy their children, instead of being the disciplinarian, which a lot of women used to charge them with which was very wrong, because the women spent most of the time with the children. Stupid! It was foolish.

AK: You had a mother who worked. Do you have a daughter?

LW: Yes, I do.

AK: Do you think that your family history affected what she chose to do with her life?

LW: I would have liked her to be a nurse. She said, "If I'm going to put in the years you've put in, I'd be a doctor." But she was interested in ballet, and she was at school, taking pre-med, and continued with her ballet. So she was doing well at school, but she said she really wanted to.... I said, "Go ahead, because you can always go back to school." So she did. A ballet life is short-lived, you know that. By thirty-five, you're over the hill. So she did fulfill her wish, and she wasn't tall enough to be a prima ballerina, and we weren't rich enough to afford her, so.... She did very well, and she was with the Bejart in Belgium, for about six months, and did dance for the king of Belgium. She's been to the Boston Ballet, the Tidewater. She's done quite a few, but it doesn't pay. She also earned money while she pursued her career, so....

AK: Has she....

LW: She went back to school.

AK: So she finished her ballet career and went back to school?

LW: She graduated summa cum laude from Hunter, and learned to use an electronic microscope, did some research with a doctor, a mentor there, and had it

published. They offered her a teaching scholarship, but she said, "Well, if I did that, I'd have to get a Ph.D., so I might as well do...." Well, she went to medical school, didn't flunk out, but doesn't want to be a doctor. Now she's working at Starbuck's, and loves it! (risas) But I tried to tell her, "You know, you could be a nurse midwife and do research." Well, she wanted to be a doctor, because the kind of research.... But I kind of think, you know, what really hit her was her age. And to do another three to five more years and have still-- she still has some student loans.

AK: And you had two children?

LW: Three. I have two sons. They both started working early. They're bright fellows, but one of them would have gone to college if he hadn't started working. He's now plant manager. He's had some courses here.

AK: Here at County College?

LW: Yes. I don't think he went through a degree. He didn't want to go to a four-year school, because he didn't want to take a lot of courses that he didn't want. You know, if that's the attitude.... But I think he would have done all right. But I don't think his father encouraged them to be in the corporate world. I don't think he was happy in it. And they'd been to the office and saw the cubbyholes and things. They had started working young, mowing lawns and things. They both went to the school in Denville, so they had a morning in Randolph.

AK: Vocational, technical school.

LW: Both of them made honor rolls and things. One of them's a plant manager now. The other one built his own home. He's dyslexic, so a paper job wouldn't appeal to him. He wouldn't be as fast or good at it. But he's smart, he's intelligent, and he reads. He didn't read, but he likes motorcycles, so I got him a motorcycle magazine, and he went in Enduro races and won a lot of trophies. And he's helping young kids now. He was asked to be an inspector for the world enduros [no claro]. So they're both productive. None are married, but none are divorced, either. And everybody tells me, "Well, there's time," but it's running out for everyone.

AK: Is there one thought about all of your varied wartime experiences that you would want to share with future generations?

LW: How nice the people are that were once your enemies, supposedly. Because I found the German people very nice and understanding, and hopefully we'll do the same in the Mideast one day. Because people generally, if you could meet them one-to-one, there's never a problem.

AK: That's a very nice perspective. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

LW: No. I just can never emphasize enough, because I don't think this generation understands how much earlier generations went without, so they could have. I don't think they'll understand it, until they get to a point where they no longer have it. And it may be sooner than they think.

AK: Okay, thank you very much.

LW: You're welcome.

Transcripción No. 5

Mabel Anderson

WAC (Women's Army Corps)

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.66247/>

Fecha de la entrevista: No especificado

Duración: 55 min.

Nombre: Mabel B. Wright-Laney Anderson

Lugar de nacimiento: Bemis, Tennessee, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Detroit, Michigan, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Afroamericana

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fecha de servicio: 1943-1945

Entrada en el servicio: Enlistada

Rama de servicio: WAC (Women's Army Corps)

Ubicación de servicio: Des Moines, Iowa; Fort Clark, Texas; Camp Claiborne, Louisiana; Camp Gruber, Oklahoma; Camp Atterbury, Indiana; Fort Sheridan, Illinois; Fort Dix, Nueva Jersey

Rango mayor: Soldado de primera

Prisionera de guerra: No

Entrevistador: Daniel Brightwell

Entrevistadora: Ethel Grossman

Colaborador: Daniel Brightwell

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: Southfield Veterans Commission

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/66247

Sujetos:

Anderson, Mabel B.

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

United States. WAC (Women's Army Corps).

Citado como:

Mabel B. Anderson Collection

(AFC/2001/001/66247), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistadora Ethel Grossman: Mabel B. Anderson for the Library of Congress' Veteran's History Project. My name is Ethel Grossman and I'm a member of the Southfield Veterans Commission, also joining me is Daniel Brightwell who's president of our Southfield Veterans Commission and Tim Wirkus who is a member of the Southfield Veterans Commission and today he's doing the video part of this interview. Mabel, would you tell us your name for the record and your birthday?

Mabel Anderson: Mabel B. Anderson. January 18th, 1916.

EG: And you were born in Detroit, Michigan... oh, no!, you were born in...

MA: Bemis, Tennessee.

EG: Bemis, Tennessee.

MA: (no claro) city on the map.

EG: Oh, but it is now, isn't it?

MA: Yes

EG: And when did you come to Detroit, Michigan?

MA: Dear, that... it takes some thinking, I think it was about 18 and 19, I had relatives here, my aunt let me come to visit her.

EG: What year was that?

MA: I believe it was 36, no it was...

EG: That's ok.

MA: I'm not sure, early thirties.

EG: 1936 that you came to Detroit.

MA: Possibly near that time, I mean I'm like up in eighty, I sort of forget dates...

EG: That's ok. And when did you decide to join the... what was the name of the Corps when you joined them?

MA: Women's Auxiliary Army Corps and I had a cousin who is, Ismael, he is in Washington now, he's a Colonel, he was drafted, he and I were very close and we stayed with that aunt, so he was drafted and I said, 'I'll believe I go', and you know

they had these signs out there everywhere, 'Uncle Sam Wants You', you know that and so I told her about it, the work I was going but I didn't do anything about it and then one day I came to work late, I was kinda sick and they said. Because I got back home and they said, 'We thought you were join the Army', I said, 'Well, I am' but I hadn't done anything about it so I went standing in the post office waiting for a bus and there's this sign, 'Uncle Sam Wants You' and looks like he's pointing right at me and I'm right in front of the post office so I had no excuse, I went in and signed up.

EG: And this was where, downtown?

MA: Detroit.

EG: On what street?

MA: On Fort Street

EG: Fort Street?

MA: 'cus I was working downtown.

EG: And you remember approximately when that was?

MA: Well yes, it was either the first of 43 or the end of 42 because when I first signed up, when I first got my papers I couldn't go because my mother got sick and was in the hospital and so I wrote and told them I couldn't go or something and they sent me papers later, I don't remember the exact date or anything but of course I did go in September, I think I was supposed to go on April or May but because my mother was sick I couldn't go and then the day of, I signed my papers it was September 43. so it must have been 43

EG: 43?

MA: 43

EG: And that was in Detroit, Michigan?

MA: Yes.

EG: Was this on Fort Street, where you... ?

MA: Yes, where I got enlisted, yes.

EG: And when did you... when you joined did you just come there and then remained or did you go back home?

MA: Oh, no, as a matter of a fact, when I signed up to go they send you orders, they send me orders to go to Fort Sugar, I believe it was and when I couldn't go they send the second orders it was for Des Moines, Iowa and that's where I went. Now, that time, I believe it was Oveta Hobby she happen to be in the city, somehow I met her when I did go to Des Moines, I road on the train with her.

EG: Now, you went straight to Detroit...

MA: To Des Moines, Iowa.

EG: To Des Moines and, so, you were in the WAAC core there...?

MA: No, I...

EG: Just joining?

MA: No, I mean I had signed up but you know, you gotta go and get trained and all.

EG: So you got on the train?

MA: Yes, I went... were you in the going?

EG: No, because I was an Army nurse, I wasn't in the WAAC.

MA: Des Moines was so huge and we happen to go to a ground where all the enlisted women were all standing all over, everyone in their place and I just get, even when I talk about it, I was so excited cu's they were saying 'a woman replace a man on the Army' and I said 'Jeez, we got these many men in the Army already?', and it seen like it have been started that long.

EG: Now, were all these people on the train with you?

MA: No.

EG: None of them?

MA: No, as a matter of a fact, I believe I was the only enlisted woman that was going that day on the train.

EG: You said that... was she a major?

MA: Yes, she was... I can't think about right now.

EG: Anyway... Major Hobby.

MA: Hobby. H-O-B-B-Y, yes

EG: Was in charge?

MA: Yes, she was a recruiter.

EG: Commander of the...

MA: Yes, and she just happen that she was here, like, that wasn't her doing to take people, it was just so happen that I was going and she was going, on the train with her.

EG: You remember how long the ride was?

MA: It was a long ride (risas) and there were some soldiers going and that... I don't don't know where they were going, they weren't going to Des Moines but anyhow, we got there and I enlisted and I can't remember details but I can remember they take you to barracks and meet people and other women who were enlisted.

EG: Other women who were in there, already in?

MA: Yes

EG: And you didn't go home after that?

MA: No.

EG: You stayed in Des Moines...

MA: Yes.

EG: And you remember how long the training period was?

MA: I believe it was 6 weeks and of course we had the drilling and so for, I was kinda short and my name was Wright so I was always on the back of the line because they lined them up alphabetically (risas) and then I was short than the taller girls so I was always at the back of the line, I still laugh about that.

EG: What month of the years was when you went to Des Moines?

MA: 1943

EG: Yeah but what month?

MA: Oh, September.

EG: So it was fall

MA: Yeah, but it was still warm there, in fact when we left there we went to Fort Worth, Texas and it was very warm, I recall that we didn't change our uniforms from summer to winter because it was so warm.

EG: When you were on Des Moines, did you took your training there?

MA: Yes.

EG: For the 6 weeks

MA: Yeah.

EG: And how old were you then?

MA: You do the math (risas) but I was in my early twenties

Entrevistador Daniel Brightwell: 25

MA: Thank you.

EG: Now, was there anyone else that had joined besides this friend of yours, was there anyone else that was in the military at that time?

MA: Well, nobody that I knew

EG: I meant that you knew?

MA: No

EG: Nobody in the family?

MA: No, only my cousin, he was male.

EG: Oh, he was the cousin... well, he's a member of your family so.

MA: Yes

EG: And he was already in when you went

MA: No, he go a little before me but he wasn't near me or anything.

EG: What was your... what were your mother's and father's position?

MA: At that time, my ma and my father were not together, they had separated, I was staying with my aunt.

EG: In Detroit?

MA: In Detroit

EG: Oh, I see, so you left from your aunt's home?

MA: Yeah

EG: You weren't an adult then, so you had to get permission so you could go in. When you were in Des Moines, you said that your training period was about 6 weeks

MA: Yes

EG: And at that time did you stayed at Des Moines, Iowa or did they...

MA: Yes, we stayed in Des Moines and then I went to school... maybe I've been longer than six weeks I don't recall actually because I went to administrative school, or did I go after?

EG: Did you get to choose what would you like to do in the service?

MA: No, because they just

EG: Assigned you to?

MA: Yeah, we gotta do (no claro)

EG: (risas) everybody gets to do that. And did you stayed in Des Moines or did they send you someplace else?

MA: Well, into the training, which I can't put a date to, that's when I was assigned to Forth Clark, Texas... how did they call people that ride horse?

D.B: Cavalry

EG: Oh, Cavalry

MA: And I was there quite a long time and I was assigned to do mail call for the girls so when they come I could give them their mail and that's one thing I always remember, there was one particular girl who never got a letter and as a matter of a fact her picture is in there too. So when they... and she just get so sad and never got a letter, so one day I called her name and she said 'oh, I got a letter', and when she got the letter it was from me (risas) but she was so pleased with it that we became great friends and as a matter of fact, I think about four years ago... we stayed friends, correspondence, she treated me to a trip to Hawaii, and 2004 I think it was but unfortunately she died last year. I was so sorry to hear, she lived in Florida, so...

EG: Now how did you get from Des Moines, Iowa to Texas?, did you go by train or...?

MA: By train

EG: Did you go with a group of people?

MA: Oh, yes, because I got there all the while from here to Saint Louis to Des Moines. There were a lot of girls there after I got there but I was going all by myself.

EG: Now, you were stationed in Texas for how long?

MBA: That I don't quite remember, I probably could check papers and find out.

EG: Oh, that's ok.

MA: I don't know how long I was there but it was quite a long time.

EG: Now, were you in the mail department all that time?

MA: I was doing the mail... either it was brought to me or I picked it up and just pass it on, I wasn't in like a post office or anything, I just got all the mail that belonged to my unit and pass it out.

EG: And that was part of your duty. Were there other duties that you did?

MA: No, I don't think I did any else

EG: That was a full time job

MA: Yes, and we got it twice a day, probably. Then, well, let's see, when I left Texas I believe they sent me to, I'm not quite sure when the time was but they decided to... they needed nurses overseas and they had to train the WAACs to replace nurses and they sent me to OC school.

EG: What year was this?, do you remember?

MA: It was probably the next year cus' I was there two and a half years. It was probably 44 and I went to training school, to be a nurse and that was very exciting.

EG: Was this in Texas?

MA: Then they transferred me to, I believe it was...

EG: Oh, Atterbury

MA: Camp Atterbury, thank you.

EG: That's in Indiana

MA: Indiana, yes. So I did...

EG: How long were you there?

MA: Well, I don't remember but I was there quite a while then I went from Atterbury to Camp Clairborne

EG: Camp Clairborne, Louisiana

MA: Yes, that's where I had the (no claro) and stuff

EG: That's where they assigned you as a nurse?

MA: Yes, to replace the nurses, medical technician and that was the time that... we were all, we were all segregated there, you know... do I shoot about that?

D. B: Yeah, please go ahead

MA: So in the daytime you know, of course, the immensity of the great big mess halls, they got white male soldiers and black male soldiers and black WAACs and every day we go in and they had a big sign, the white soldiers sat on the front of

the mess hall, the WAACs were next and the black soldiers were last. So when I was working on the hospital, when I was going on duty, one night there weren't many soldiers on duty, maybe, you know, twelve and me in the whole hospital so when I got in I always have to like I did any time, go for my plate and take my food in the back and eat it, so when I decided I wasn't going back there... that's a funny thing when I think about Rosa Parks, it reminds me but this was long before that and they told me that I couldn't sit in the front of the mess hall, that I had to go to the back and I said 'Why I have to go in the back?, I mean, there's plenty of room', 'You can't sit in the front because there's the back, now go in the back'. Now, I don't see why I had to take my food in the back and eat it, you know... so we had words and I don't remember what I said but I was written up and the next morning I was sent for the mess hall and boy, I almost cry every time I think about it... this man was so angry, he hit on his desk 'bam!', 'I hear you went on my mess hall!' Oh, Lord, I was shaking in my bones, I really was and then I said 'No, I didn't say that, I said I didn't see why I had to in the back of the mess hall when nobody was there', so I told him 'I'm sorry' but then I told him 'Well, if I'm good enough...' and all the soldiers came back to the hospital were white soldiers and I had to take care of them all night and, as a matter of fact there was one soldier one night that kept calling me 'nurse, I need this, I need that', and I said 'listen, you had me coming back and forth, why don't you tell me what do you want?', and he said 'well, I just wanted to tell you it's good to see you'. But anyhow, the next morning, the next day we went to eat and instead of the white soldiers on the front they had a big sign up in the front of the mess hall 'WAACs' and then they had the white soldiers and then the black soldiers so anyway they gave us our proper, they didn't say anything to me or anything, you know, they just changed, I guess he just thought about it and I told him 'Well, if I'm good enough to serve the soldiers all night, I'm certainly good enough to sit beside him in the mess hall' and beside I don't know, there were enough tables so everybody had a different table. So that was the incident that happened there.

D. B: So how did that make you feel?, that you made that change coming about?

MA: Well... I thought it was nice, we were pleased, we were pleased.

EG: Now, did you... you were on night duty, you said you were the only nurse on duty, did you... were you trained to give medications?

MA: Oh, yes, we were trained for nurses, I was a practical nurse when I came up but I had to take additional training when I wanted to be a registered nurse.

EG: Oh, so you're a registered nurse?

MA: No, I didn't go back and... no. But I enjoyed working in the hospital or in fact watched autopsies and different things and... I remember they were doing an autopsy on a soldier and they were watching me more than watching what they were doing cus' they were afraid I was going to faint or something but I was very strong.

EG: That was the first time you saw an autopsy?

MA: Yes and I learned tricks everywhere, I mean, somebody said 'pain what you got to do' and when I got out and worked for a pediatrician. I remember this little girl died with her teeth like this, biting her lip so when they checked your brain, they had to cut and just pull and while they were in there they saw the skull and when they were doing the sawing, it looked like she was biting her lip and I almost cried but I didn't, I stood there, be strong and then I said 'I'm glad she was biting her lip' and another time I, they had a little girl, they couldn't get bold anywhere so they had to get it here (señala el cuello), the doctor put her on the table and said 'don't let her move' and when they got the blood in there, boy I wanted to scream but I had nerves of steel, I had to charge that way to see, you know, cus' I know he was making somebody well.

EG: Now, were you stationed in this place the whole time, the rest of the time?

MA: Well, then I went to two places, let's see, I think I went to Atterbury in nursing and I believe Fort Dix, yeah, in fact that was...

D. B: So you were in Clairborne, Louisiana and from there you went to Fort Dix...

MA: I went to Fort Dix almost last... I try to think that I go to administrative school before, I think I went to administrative school before I went to medical technician school and I passed to be an officer but the quota was failed and few of us couldn't go. I felt bad, until the first sergeant in the supply sergeant were turned down too, we had passing the text but we couldn't go because when the first group of black

WAACs went in they trained them right away so they could train the ones that were coming in and after while they had the quota, but we didn't get to go to officers training and I wanted to because my cousin was in officers' training and I wanted to follow, he was the first Lieutenant and I would've been a Lieutenant but it was ok, I got promoted to PFC.

EG: Now this was at Fort Dix... where were you when you were gonna go to officers' training school?, you were still at Clairborne?

MA: Clairborne

EG: In Louisiana and you went to Fort Dix after that.

MA: Yes.

EG: Did you go by train?

MA: Yes, that's all we had to travel, by train

EG: And then, when you were in Fort Dix, you went to administrative school?

MA: I have been

EG: Oh, you had already been

MA: Because I was medical technician and after I was turned down from the promotion, so...

EG: And when you were at Fort Dix, did you worked stationed in the hospital there?

MA: Yes.

EG: That's where I came into the service

MA: You've been?

EG: Yes. And how long did you, where you there?

MA: I don't... I'm sorry

EG: Well, approximately...

MA: Well, a while, then I think I... I believe I left there and went to Sheridan, that's where I was discharged

EG: And how long were you in the service?

MA: Only two and a half years or something like that

EG: So if you went on in '43 so it must have been 1945...

MA: As a matter of a fact I was discharged on the last day... see the discharge date on the...

EG: Oh

MA: I think it was December 29...

EG: December 31st, 1945

MA: Yeah, so I said two and a half, maybe it wasn't two and a half years but on some place so I said five months and some days.

EG: Were you there after the...

MA: Well, the war ended, you know.

EG: Where were you in May when the war ended in Europe?

MA: In Louisiana or someplace down there...

EG: And after the bomb was dropped in Japan...

MA: I know I was there until the war was over

EG: You were in Fort Dix then

MA: I think that was the last place I served, then went to Fort Sheridan and I believe I was discharged from Sheridan... it's been a very long time

EG: Yea, I know (risas)

MA: It's hard for me to remember

D.B: Just looking back a little. When you were in Clairborne, Louisiana, approximately how many WAACs where working there...?

MA: Oh, there were a bunch

D.B: A bunch?, oh...

MA: Oh, yes, we had a whole barrack, as a matter of fact.

D.B: All of you were black?

MA: Yes, we never worked together, never, we were always separated.

EG: The Army was disaggregated by...

MA: By the President but...

EG: President Truman, so...

MA: But we were never separated, I mean we were never integrated

D.B: What do you remember most about your time there in Clairborne?, was that were you spent most of your time in the military?

MA: Yes, because I was in the hospital, I remember I was working on the hospital, in fact, funny incident happened... there were white soldiers and they tried to

sneak on the barracks with the girls and they used to beat upon them, once they beat up one guy so bad he had to go to the hospital. So they got the Commander on the phone and put him in loud speaker and said 'girls stop beating this guy' (risas) we laughed, that was something.

Salto al 51:00

EG: And there's anything you like to say and closing for the interview?

MA: I don't know, I don't want lies... I'm glad that I was in the service, that's been good to me.

Transcripción No. 6

Mildred Axton

WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots)

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.10290/>

Fecha de la entrevista: 2003

Duración: 57 min.

Nombre: Mildred 'Micky' Darlene Tuttle Axton

Lugar de nacimiento: Coffeyville, Kansas, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Kansas, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Blanca

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fecha de servicio: 1943-1944

Entrada en el servicio: Enlistada

Rama de servicio: WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots)

Ubicación de servicio: Pecos, Texas, Estados Unidos

Prisionera de guerra: No

Nota: La veterana sirvió como piloto de prueba

Entrevistador: Tim Klein

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: TCB Entertainment

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/10290

Sujetos:

Axton, Mildred Darlene

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

United States. WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots).

Citado como:

Mildred Darlene Axton Collection

(AFC/2001/001/10290), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistador Tim Klein: Hello, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to 'Talk about the good times', 'I'm your host, my name is Tim Klein and today's show is going to feature 'Micky' Axton, local woman air service pilot from WWII and I'm gonna, to start the show today, I'm gonna read a quote from, that was made famous by Eleanor Roosevelt and it goes like this and it really sets the tone for today's show, she said, Eleanor said that 'The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams', and that's how we're gonna start today's show with Micky Axton. Micky, I'll like to welcome you to talk about the good times out here at TCB Studio and I have to tell you upfront, Micky, that I've already had one show that just recently ended here with major Joe Gomer, the of course very famous, Tuskegee airman, one of the very famous, the whole group is famous but he is one of the local famous ones here and so I'm all warmed up and ready to go, so, we're going, you might add some competition for who can talk the longest on this show, the first was a little reserved but I'm ready to go now. So, we'll start with that quote and we'll there and I want also to show this picture here and I think they've had it scanned and I probably don't need to hold it up like this, oh, there it is... this is where your dream started, Micky and what's, I'm gonna pass the bar right to you at this point and let you talk about how your dream started there and how of that Curtis Jenny sparked your dream and then I'll like to talk about a little about the importance of introducing young people to a lot of different things because you never know what kind of thing is gonna be introduced to spark their dreams and this became a lifelong accomplishment for you, so I'm gonna pass it to you and we'll go from there.

Mildred Axton: Well, thank you, I'm thrilled to be here and thank you for inviting me. First time I saw an airplane in the sky, my mother said I was five and I said, 'I wanna be up there, that's where I wanna be' and I heard later that my brother thought the same way, he was two years younger and I'll like to tell you that I feel like the luckiest gal in the whole wide world, everything has happened at the right time for me and to fill my dreams. How can you imagine being so lucky to live in the same block, just a couple doors from a barnstormer pilot, now these pictures

that he showed you were the planes that the WWI had their training in and after the war they had lots of them and they sold them to the pilots and they were all over the country, there were very few airports and they just fly over and land on pastures and they fly over the tan and all the people would go out and the plane would land and they would take up passengers but not to many people were anxious to go up but my brother and I, I was eleven and my brother was nine and the neighbor knew us and we went to fly, mother at first she said, 'it's ok', she was very adventurous too, she would like to being a pilot if she had the opportunity but they took us up every time and we just had a strap, no parachute, all open and they said, 'You kids wanna do a loop or a roll?', 'Oh', we said, 'sure' and they take us up and do all sorts of things and then we come down and then they had us sell tickets for a dollar and a lot of the people would go 'cus they were just in street level but they told us later that they sold more tickets in copy bill when they took us to load kids up and thing everything than anywhere else. Can you imagine being so lucky?

TK: Now, you were up in the air in this airplane that we just showed and you were doing flips and rolls and everything like that...?

MA: They were doing them, of course we were just stunned.

EK: Yeah, ok and, because we were up in the plane the other day and of course they got, you know Brat Pass and Tim Jackson and Don Haynes, they were good enough to get us up in the B-25 Mitchell and then Jesse Buckerman who's our great director back there, he flew up in a plane alongside of us and got all the footage...

MA: Oh, he did?

TK: And at one point I think Brad and Tim radioed over to them and said, 'Open the cockpit so you don't have the interference from the different mechanisms over the cockpit' and Jesse was just like, 'No, that's ok, I'll just keep it close, I don't think Tim would be too happy about the two thousand dollar camera going over the lake'. So there's a lot about airplanes, you talked a little bit about how your dream started and I think before we actually get into that, we should talk about the term 'WASP' and what is that for the people who don't know anything about, you know

aviation, there's gonna be a lot of people in the audience that don't know anything about aviation and wanna learn more. What's the significance of that term and what does it stands for and, so...?

MA: Ok, WASP is for Women Airforce Service Pilots and, later, when in 1939 and the war was going really bad in Europe, Eleanor Roosevelt and Jacqueline Cochran decided that we needed lots of women to be pilots so the men could go to combat and before that our country was trying to stay out of the war and we really needed lots of pilots and lots of planes and they talked General Arnold into letting two women in each class in 1940 and I just graduated from Kansas State and I had taken, I always wanted to be a pilot so I had lots of math and lots of physics and everything that would qualify me for and my brother already had taken the course in junior College, two years younger. When I came home, they, I applied and I was chosen to be in the class and this happened all over the country that they were just turning thousands of men and we had 200 licensed women pilots before 1940 and during that 1940 period we had 3,000, that's where the WASP, when the program started, where they got the licensed women pilots and almost all of them were College graduates or College seniors who had really good backgrounds and so we had the same training, called the 'Civilian Training Pilot Program', the CTP and I took that in the summer of 1940 and here again I was awful lucky, when I was in College the courses I was taking to be a chemist, my SAT advisors said, 'You better take a teacher's certificate 'cus you'll never get a job as a chemist', they only employed men and so I did they were gonna have the advance course for the men 'cus they knew they were gonna be in war and a larger plane and they needed someone to teach the course I've just finished and I already had a pretty good job at the engineers office, at the city engineer and they asked me to come, I couldn't believe this and I liked getting the job as a chemist teacher but they said, 'Well, you come and teach this course and support our College course and you could also teach a chemistry class and be in charge of all the chemistry labs', so here right out of College I was teaching in a junior College, I was really lucky.

TK: Yeah, that's amazing. Now...

MA: But you haven't go to the WASP yet.

TK: Ok, I'll let you, let me ask a quick question and I kinda lead into that.

MA: Ok, I ought to tell you that first, though.

TK: Ok, you wanna go ahead?, why don't you go ahead first and tell, talk about the WASP and then I kinda jumped ahead of myself anyway, which I had no reason to do.

MA: Did you have the quote from Eleanor Roosevelt that you gave, that women were waiting...

TK: Yeah.

MA: So, they formed... first they send 25 of women to England that were really good pilots and with Jacqueline Cochran to prove that women could fly anything. Jacqueline Cochran already held most of the records and she won the Bendix Air Race in 1936, I mean in 1936 and beaten all the men, of course she had a husband who could afford to buy her a very good plane but she took the women there and they proved that women with a lot of hours could fly anything with some, a little bit of training and they flew the big Lancaster bombers and the Spitfires and so Arnold said, 'Come home and we'll form a program for all these women who already know how to fly, who are already pilots and we'll teach them just like we do the men and then they could do the job seriously so the men can go, and that's how the WASP was formed, we were Women Airforce Pilots, we did jobs that all the men were doing and teaching and doing targets and testing planes and working for the weather, anything and we really had more training than the men because the men... we had primary and basic [training] where you know how to fly instruments in the night and that was pretty tough and then next, the men either chose to be a fighter pilot or a bomber pilot because flying was a lot different but we were gonna fly everything, so we had both training, we had more hours when we graduated than the men because we were gonna fly everything that they had, that's how it came, Women Airforce Pilots. We were gonna make service so the men could go flying.

TK: Ok, great story. Now, that kinda... I'm glad I let you go there because you kinda let into my next question now and I have to thank a good friend of mine, Sam Hernandez who helped me prepare the questions for this show, he's a multicultural

consultant who lives in Stillwater and he's, back in the eighties he was very big with corporations and talking about the diversity and so he helped me with a lot of the questions. Next question I'm gonna ask you, he said, 'be careful, be sure you preface it correctly', he was very careful about that so, but, for women pilots, they made, and correct me if I'm wrong, but there were a lot of excuses made essentially for why they couldn't go into combat. Do you want?, can you take it from there and I think I'll stop there but they came up with the idea that there was physical limitations and can you take it from there?

MA: Well, we all had to be in good physical condition and I had to take the training in Pecos to be examined by the Airforce and we had to be in excellent physical condition, beat standards of high eight and everything so they had educated women and they were in best physical condition but they weren't talking in that time anything about us going to combat, they were just talking about us doing jobs here in the United States so the men could go to combat because they were needed, combat didn't come up 'till later.

TK: Yeah, until later and I think he referred to that fact later on when it came to be, the question came to be, could women be combat pilots?, at that time?

MA: Well, you know how well they're doing now.

TK: Let's, as long as we're here now, let's talk about that issue because that's interesting and what's happening for women right now in aviation with, as far as combat is concerned because that's my big interest, you know.

MA: Well, when they sent us home, when we've flown 60 million miles and done anything they had, everything, they send us home with nothing. I was gonna tell you they promised us to be a lieutenant but we didn't had any insurance, they have canceled our private insurance 'cus it was so dangerous, we didn't had flight pay but they treated us, they told them they had to treat us as officers and we had the privilege of the Officer's Club and such but we were just WASP, we had no rank but we were treated as officers but the idea of combat didn't come up at all until they were, December sending us home, they activated, they said, Congress had some people in there that hated women and they didn't want them flying all there, especially the B-29, and they managed to get rid of us even though Arnold wanted

to keep us and we were still needed but we would've stayed and worked for nothing, we would've gone to combat, all of us, we knew we were gonna be still needed and it was such a... everybody, it was just a sad time to just be send home with nothing and the girls were killed, 38 were killed during the time, the three years we flew, with, we've taken collections to send their bodies home, they didn't even get a flight but you know?, it didn't matter to us that we didn't had those things because, first we were doing something that we loved to do and also we were helping our country which we knew it really needed us and in 1944, in 50 trainee bases all the testing of all the planes was done by women so they really trusted us and they toured up a lot of planes, they had to be repaired and we had to fly them first and I, when I graduated, I was one of the first of the engineering test pilots 'cus before that they were all fairy pilots, they flew the planes across the country or to the points of embarcation, the planes couldn't fly across, they had to be taken on ships, all the fighters and now women fly the tankers and they refuel them the fighter pilots had to refuel six times to get across to the rock, isn't that something?

TK: That's amazing. My next question is, has to do, and you led me into good way, and the question that I had for you actually has slipped my mind and then come back to it. Let's talk about... and I know the question was...

MA: You were going to talk about combat

TK: It came back to me, ok, that's old age kicking in, that's what happens when you age...

MA: Oh, I'm 84 (risas)

TK: My question is, based on the information that you just gave the audience, do you feel camaraderie with people of color because of what you experienced?

MA: Of course, I never had any problem with people of color.

TK: But did you feel at that time, how did you feel at that time in relation to what they were experiencing

MA: We didn't even know about that at that time, we knew very little about what was going on, we were so busy we didn't had the papers much of the time, we knew very little about, major things we knew about, but we really didn't know about

what was going on, I didn't know about the Tuskegee Airmen until later and I thought that was terrible that they were treated like they were because I never felt that there was any difference and we had one Chinese girl and she was killed and I've always been brought up that everyone is equal and my mother always said, 'Do everything you can to help people', which I tried to do and try to make the best of everyday of your life. I just had wonderful parents that thought us to, you know, be friendly with everyone and that just had been my life.

TK: That led me into my next question and thank a lot, Micky, I mean you're just helping me into these questions here. I have a quote here and this one is by Ellen Keller and it says: 'Your success and happiness lay in you, resolve to keep happy and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties'. Now, you're 84 years old you've obviously embodied that quote.

MA: All my life.

TK: And you have a lot of pictures here to show of your experiences that have contributed to this happiness, to where you are now and from hearing you and Elizabeth Strauss that is in our next show talk.

MA: We think we're a lot alike.

TK: Yes, and...

MA: We never change.

TK: And I appreciate that 'cus I don't know if I'll be able to afford you.

MA: All we ask is a ride, because I don't ride in the traffic, I'm doing like they say, if you're in your eighties, stay out of the heavy traffic and you don't drive neither in bad weather. (risas)

TK: Yeah, they tell me that too and I'm in my mid-forties so... I don't know what's gonna happen when I get eighty, I don't know I'll get that far.

MA: Of course you will.

TK: But anyway, is this a good time for us to look at these pictures and maybe the folks back in the control room could start to talk a little bit about it.

MA: I could tell you a little bit about them

TK: You know I'll give my camera men some gray hair and bend down there they always like it when you do that because they have to adjust the cameras but I think we've got these

MA: That one, let's go to the next one.

TK: Ok, we'll go to the next one, you know the order that they're in so I'm gonna rely on you and this first picture is... and maybe you could just kinda take it from here.

MA: That's beyond the screen?

TK: yeah, it's been shown now.

(Se muestra una fotografía en blanco y negro de 4 personas de pie frente a una avioneta)

MA: Oh, I see. Well, this is a fantastic picture and everyone just loves this. I've just gotten my pilots license. I was 21 here and that's a little 51 spartak that my uncle said that you just fly on a shingle and my mother, my grandfather was chief of police when all the bank robbers where down in Coffeyville and he was such a fast drive, never had to kill anyone because they just dropped their gun when he came in and I had two great-grandparents that were US marshals and my great-grandmother was 91 and she was the frist, she was my first passenger in that little 51 spartak and she just love it, she said, 'Oh, that was so much better than caret wagons'. 91 and I was 21.

TK: Ok, interesting picture, interesting story. Ok, the next picture, put in the girls, ok, the crew back there has this one and I think you could just talk about this one, Micky, you don't have to hold it up and we let the crew take it from there.

MA: Well, Jacqueline Cochran and Eleanor Roosevelt were good friends, the Cochrans were good friends with the Roosevelts and of course she wrote a column called 'My Day', and she kept telling that women should be used in every way and they were in the factories. You know, before that women just had to stay home, they really couldn't do much of anything but of course when the men had to go to work and the women did a wonderful job because of all the planes that we ferried, only two were killed because something was wrong with that airplane and one of them was my best friend so they did a really good job and here she says we have

all this 3,000 women, they're just a weapon that we use and they can be trained just like the men and we had this and later General Arnold said that we could fly wing tip to wing tip with our brothers, when we were deactivated after three years of flying we flown every plane they had and did every job they had and at 50 air bases they trusted us enough that all the planes were tested by women and they flew them, they couldn't fly them unless we were ok and that's... Eleanor Roosevelt was the main one that got us go on, she and Jacqueline Cochran.

TK: In your opinion, Micky, will a woman ever become president of the United States?

MA: I expect so, one of these days, I think they'll get kind of tired of all the things that the men do (risas)

TK: I hope we do get a woman in there so we get a little bit better perspective.

MA: A little more honest (risas)

TK: There we go. That's a whole new show

MA: But I'm not a... I think that, well, what I'm saying is that I'm not woman sleeper, I just know that we have a lot of intelligent women that are probably a little more honest and a little more sympathetic and a few more things than the men but that's all I have to say about that.

TK: Ok, the next picture is, maybe you could describe this and they get that up in the screen.

(Muestra una fotografía en blanco y negro de un hombre sentado sobre el fuselaje de un avión)

MA: Well, I have to tell you why and people couldn't believe it. When I had my telegram, I had a one year old baby daughter and my husband was working at Ceech, he was a pilot but the ___ oughta keep the men that they wanted to build the planes and they needed the Beech 8011 really bad because that's where they trained the pilots, the navigator and the bombardier and they went as a team of three at the end of the bombers so they were able to keep him even though he was a pilot and when I received my telegram and had my interview that I was needed, just before that I had a letter from my brother who was a fighter pilot down at Guadalcanal and the marines had just drown in there few months before and all

they had was a Henderson air strip and they were having a terrible time because they didn't have any night fighters, they were just really being bombed and my brother's group that he went all through flying with volunteered to go down there and be night fighters and they didn't even had any planes for them, they had to take attack bombers, Douglas 820 attack bombers and painted black and put some guns on them and canons and 18 out of the 20 that went down were killed in the first three months and my brother wrote and told me that and he said, 'It's just terrible, so outnumbered, we need pilots so badly'. So here I have a telegram at practically the same time that I had a letter from my brother and even though I was so happily married, a lot of people thought out my marriage was falling apart when I left and my mother and daddy said, 'Of course you had to go', and they took care of our little girl and I knew she'll be fine with them and she wouldn't remember about it and my husband agreed because they were such desperate straits down in Guadalcanal, so that's why I went and a lot of people could never understand that I could possibly... well, look now, half the men and women are going, that have children because they feel like they are needed and I knew I was needed and I prayed every night that I make it and graduate and one night I was at the flight line when a plane crashed and two girls were killed, they stalled in and I... cried all night but they made all of us through the flight line and so it happen they made us go up and fly but our instructor went with us, fly at night and one girl didn't do it and she was washed out but I could not have lived with myself if I hadn't gone when they said they needed me. No, really, I wouldn't and we'd already lost some of our friends I trained with and my brother is losing all of his friends, we were really in bad shaping in the war so that's why I went. A lot of people couldn't understand I could possibly lose my husband and baby and it was hard, I cried myself at sleep a lot of nights.

TK: How did you husband deal with that situation?

MA: Well, I had the most wonderful husband in the world, we grew up as kids, went up to the third grade together, skating and biking and swimming and everything, we were good pals but in our classes, when we were seniors we fell in love about the first week and he was just absolutely wonderful and his parents thought him like

mine did: 'make the very best of every day of your life and keep it', we tried all of our lives to keep the other one happy and we were married 59 years.

TK: Congratulations

MA: And it was all wonderful and our children we thought them the same way and they are growing up the same way, trying to help other people and try to make each day the best you can. So, and like I said, I never turned anyone down, I just put it where I can and I never charge and I sent a lot of pictures which I spent a lot of money on and I'm just thrilled and happy to help and teach these little kids and when they come up and hug you and... I'll tell you one other thing, one day I was talking to fourth grade kids and I talked about the war and I explained that the German people weren't bad it was just Hitler and the Nazis and afterwards this little boy came up to me and hugged me and he said, they called me Miss Micky, that's how they named my plane, he said, 'I know what you were saying, I know that it was Hitler that was bad and the Nazis', and then another thing is that their teacher was German and she came over and hugged me too and she said, 'I'm so glad you put that in because so many people thought the Germans were bad and they were good people', they didn't want to hurt anyone or kill more than we wanted to but I tried to get that across at every special I thought for children.

TK: And that's a good point I think to bring up, on more contemporary issues, with all we're dealing with around the world, I think there's this misconception on everybody's part, regardless of what country you are from...

MA: I know.

TK:... about the fact that it's not the people that are leading the governments, that are making the decisions and that affects the people, it affects how people view things and so that's a very good point.

MA: Oh, he bring that point up too, how they were treated and everything that, it's just so important that it doesn't matter where there... it's the person and try to help them and everybody that you can and don't matter what country they're from but I feel very strongly about it and my mother did too, she never worked on a job, all her life she did volunteer work for everybody and helped everybody and had a wonderful happy life.

TK: Describe what the feeling is of being on an airplane and you're up above the clouds.

MA: It's wonderful.

TK: Describe that feeling for us and... you have one way to describe it?

MA: I can't even begin to describe it... It's just absolutely wonderful, it's so peaceful and so beautiful with the clouds and everything, you just feel like you're almost in heaven already, really!, and my job was the best one for me, I was the most qualified for it but I loved do what I had to do, because I had to put up to every basic maneuver, flips and rolls and spins and snap rolls and everything and then check all the instruments and make sure it was absolutely safe for the men but I just love to do that. That was just lot better than just fly across the country.

TK: So, clarify something for me now. You went up, tested the aircraft and of course before you took it up in the air you checked it early like any pilot would do...

MA: And check everything on the ground, we had to learn all about engines and everything else.

TK: That's right but then you got up in the air and you did a lot of acrobatic maneuvers in the air...

MA: Everything

TK:... to test the airplane further and really you were essentially like a guinea pig, really.

MA: Well, of course

TK: To a certain extent.

MA: Yeah, we were flying at first and like I said, the men I replaced, they were all so tickled to see us because they were anxious to go to the combat and win the war and they said they rather face the enemy than test those planes and all that damage to be repaired. There were over 300 on the base where I was, they were flying 86s and the twin engine Cessna and you couldn't see the front of it, the twin engine, you had to tax it back and forth and they run into each other and damage wings and everything and all the runways were north and south, they couldn't change them every time the wind changed so a lot of times you had make pretty strong cross wind landings and they would ground loop and run into another plane

and tear up the prop and the wing and mess up the engine so we tested, there were three of us there and we tested everything, four, five, maybe six planes a day but after Tommy had a forced landing but she made it back, we decided that we take the head mechanic with us and he could ride in the back or in the back seat and if he was new we had to go and figure he really checked it pretty good so... we felt pretty good, we loved what we were doing and they just treated us wonderfully in the engineering department and they were so glad to have us and then they turned down a lot of them like I told you in 1944, in 50 bases, all of the testing in the training bases was done by women, so you know they trusted us.

TK: That must have been a great feeling, just for your self-esteem as a young lady at that time, you know, because women at that time in the society were... it's changed a lot since then, it's evolved to different level now, more women are working, working in different positions and back then that was not the case so you really, I'm assuming you considered yourself a pioneer.

MA: We were pioneers. Do you know that women that had a wealthy husband could not even have a job?, back then, after the war, when the war they took all the women to work at the factories, that was different, that was the first time they had a chance, before that if you had, that's were all the teachers were old maids, if they got married they couldn't work, did you knew this?, and in 1947, the Supreme Court had to pass a law that women could not be discriminated because they were married but of course that didn't count during the war because the women were doing half of the work in all the tanks and the planes and everything and they did an excellent job and the men, a lot of them believed in myth that men were probably more careful and then before that as long as I was single I could get jobs but only in certain things like in waitress or beauty shop or something like that or teaching.. but Supreme Court had to pass a law and that just floors all women today and now all the women are flying all the airplanes in the airports and they're even flying as a whole crew in a tanker and a boom operator and I know several of them and that to me I don't want any part of that, that's getting the plane too close to you, when you just have to put out that, fly the boom and hook up with the plane and refueled it and they had to refueled it six times to get across the ocean and I

know several of them that were doing that and they sent me a, all of them flying a picture and most of them were women and they are flying everything we have now and you know that one woman, her plane was shut up and knocked out most of her system that helped her fly the plane but she brought it back on just to the basic place that she had and she brought it back, I saw her when she was out of control, I watched it and she landed it back in the base, I was so proud of her I just cried.

TK: Now you talked about women today are flying all types of planes, you flew an F-16...

MA: No, I've flown a B-29 twice.

TK: Oh, ok, all right, that's Elizabeth actually that did that.

MA: She had it right.

TK: I'm sorry, that was my mistake.

MA: That's Elizabeth, she had it right and they let her fly it.

TK: Do you desire to fly an F-16?, I mean if you could do it today?

MA: Well, sure!

TK: Would you do it?

MA: For sure!

TK: Ok, maybe we could arrange that.

MA: Although I'm not trained for.

TK: You'll have to be a copilot.

MA: Then sure!, but any plane that they invite me to be in, I'll like to fly it and I'll get to it once in a while. You don't, it isn't something you forget but I would, I have high blood pressure, I can't pass a physic so I can't take it off and land it but I'll still be able to fly it and that's like she did, we could be invited to fly one.

TK: Micky, what was your favorite airplane to fly?

MA: My favorite airplane to fly was the 86, the advanced trainer for fighter pilots because it was so wonderful to handle and almost all pilots, I'll tell you, except for when they get in the fighters, but it's probably about the favorite of most all pilots because lots of 86s it was the fighter plane for everybody and also it was a fighter trainer called the SNJ for the Navy, it was the same plane and I've got a picture there... (Muestra una fotografía de un grupo de gente posando con uniformes de

la Marina en un salon, distribuidos en dos filas) This picture, there are two girls in this class as in there were no women pilots for almost 40 years, when they sent us home that was the end, now we could've stayed and be a lieutenant in a desk job or something like that but most of them didn't want to that but some did and I was a lieutenant in the reserve after I got home until the Korean War and then had a son so I couldn't take a chance on being called up but they did give a lieutenant if you stayed flying couldn't fly anymore. But there are two girls in this class but they read an article they did in Corpus Christi about me where I said that we had no insurance and they just sent the bodies home and take up collection and no fly again and the captain at the Mable Airbase in Corpus Christi called me and asked me if I could speak for the graduation of the Navy and Marine pilots, I couldn't believe it, I mean there's, always there's a certain riot between the Navy and Air Force, you know, a certain amount and here I was a woman of the Air Force and they wouldn't invite me but he read that article in the paper where I said we didn't had any insurance and had to take up collections and send them home and he said he wanted his pilots to know about that and also they had air fighting training in the same plane 86, that was called the SNJ, so all their fighter pilots had the same training the Air Force had before they went into the other planes and they invited me back twice and they presented me with my coat Navy wings and I'm the only WASP, that's my only WASP honor and they said you could wear them and I do.

TK: Congratulations.

MA: Isn't that something?, they invited me three times and I said that made me pretty nervous with all those admirals and everybody there. I want you to show a picture of my brother.

TK: Ok.

MA: We got pass that.

TK: This one is...

MA: Right there on the top... (Muestra dos fotografías, dos retratos, a la izquierda, Mildren Axton de joven con gorro de piloto posando para la cámara y a la derecha su hermano con su uniforme de piloto posando para la cámara) Two years younger and I don't know for sure but I've asked in every reunion if anyone had a

brother in the Air Force before they made into camp in 1943 when I went in and I haven't had anyone saying but I don't know for sure but isn't that good?, he was younger and he stayed in and had 225 missions and had two Distinguished Flying Crosses and everything and he also got a Silver Star for extreme bravery. He saw an island where they were all loading a barge and they weren't any man in the aircraft guns and he radioed his commander if they would be ok to go and strike them and the commander said that's too dangerous, don't do it, we did it anyway and knocked all the planes that just went down and just strike them back down and he nagged the barged and killed them and when he got back his commander was gonna have him court martial and they gave him the Silver Star for bravery (risas)

TK: Wow, isn't that something?, that's a great story.

MA: That was sort of like Bong, Bong did things that they should never gonna court martial him and his general gave him the Silver Star too for extreme bravery.

TK: Now Major Bong, for the audience sake...

MA: He was our top ace.

TK: Our top ace.

MA: And he flew the P-38 that my brother flew too and also flew the P-51 but he shut down 40 planes but I got, they gave me the book and they said he could have a lot more of that but he let his wing man shut them down instead of him, so that was really nice, a wonderful man and I joined that and gonna help advertise everywhere I go.

TK: Now you have some props I guess we could called them for the show, that you want to talk a little bit about and this is, maybe we could start with this one right here.

MA: I have a picture there, we had wear for anytime we were home and goggles and open cockpit and another thing, I have a little bit of claustrophobia and I didn't wanted to be caught in a plane if it caught fired so I never closed my canopy it was always open.

TK: There you go, Jessie, you should've talked to Micky there before we got up in the plane, we would've got some shot without the canopy up there.

MA: But we loved the helmet and the goggles and the kids love to wear them, we take, we have a cockpit of the P-51 it's on a fly pit tailor and we take it to the schools and sit in it and I didn't bring my Air Force plaid two jacket because there's too much to carry, but they put on the helmet and the goggles and the jacket and take their picture and we have a pilot there to tell them about the instruments and they just love it and it's just wonderful, we took it down to Charles City and we had probably about 300 sit in it and I have a picture there of me sitting there too.

TK: Had you been able to fly in combat, talk a little bit about where would you have been in comparison to the men as far as plane shot downs?

MA: Well, Arnold said we could fly wing tip to wing tip, that we could fly as well, they knew that we could fly as well as the men and all of us knew we were just as brave, you know, when we went in we didn't know how long we were going to be in or where we would go, we had no idea, we didn't know even if we were gonna win the war, it was so bad, I mean they just rolled over Europe and England was just about to go under and everything and they had Japanese on all islands, we lost the Philipines because we weren't properly prepared and when we went in, we didn't know what but we volunteered to go and stay and I know I wouldn't been as good as my brother because he was a natural pilot and I just had to learn how to do everything, it probably because I'm not musical or have a good sense of time like some people, I can't, I don't play but I would've gone and I worked hard and everything that I could, all of us would , when we, when they said that they were gonna disband us, Congress did, they said, 'We'll stayed and work for a dollar a year or we'll work for nothing or we'll go to combat', because we knew we were needed, they didn't had the invasion of Europe yet (risas)

TK: Interesting.

MA: But I know I wouldn't have been as good as my brother and some of the men but I would sure have tried.

TK: In retrospect, what would your recommendations be to, if you would be able to go back in history and change anything that happened as far as our United States attitude towards how we thought was Hitler or the Japanese, what would you change?

MA: We didn't have any choice there because they just ran over everything, they were all both so well prepared and the Japanese would fly to the last man, I don't know if you knew but when we dropped the atom bomb, that program was planned and that's why they had to have the B-29s because they had to have one bigger plane that could fly further, it was, I have all that information and the planning of the Boeing and everything but I don't know, when in talked about it was planned, we didn't have any choice, we came awful close to losing our freedom, you know if the Japanese had come, kept coming, they probably could've taken a while too and we would've really been in trouble because we weren't prepared, we were just sitting in the ground, we were not getting the information, they've probably just kept coming and take it just like they did in the Philipines and if we wouldn't have helped England, they would have gone too, and we wouldn't have a base at all and our country had some warning but we tried to be isolationist, we really did and stayed out of it, we sent a lot to England before we were in it but after the Battle of Britain in 1940 that lasted that summer, they lost most of their top pilots, over 900, I have the statistics on that and that's when our women and people all over the world that were pilots went to help England and the 25 women that Jacqueline Cochran took, they weren't fighters to help them, they were going over to prove that women could do it so we could help them but we came awful close to, all of us, losing our freedom early in the war because we just weren't prepared but once we started they just build airfield so fast and they were training and they were using everybody the best, we were trained by the pilots that the Air Force didn't want, they were older, they didn't wanted anyone over 25, 25 and they were our instructors, they trained them and they weren't instructors but we had Air Force test pilots but we were in really sad shape and it's just scary, it amazes me how we could've produce everything we did, to go from, you've been in big industry, you've seen all the equipment that they had to have to make like a tank or an airplane and all the stuff, how they went so fast and build all the ships too that take so long to build and everything that we did on that period of five years really it amazes me but they just didn't waste time and they just took everybody and put them in the best place they could, that's what they tried to do but we wouldn't have gone there if Eleanor

Roosevelt and Jacqueline Cochran hadn't fought for us because there were too many men in Congress that didn't think women could anything.

TK: Ok, well, Micky, I've really appreciated all the time you've taken here and we have Elizabeth Struffus.

MA: She has a wonderful story too.

TK: I can tell that she's just really excited about getting on the show here and I'll like to take this opportunity here and thank our camera man Dwayne and I'm gonna test my memory here and see if I could remember everyone involved in this back in the studio, I think we have Maureen Anderson, I'll like to thank you for your great crew work and your son Colin and we have Billy and of course we have Jesse and Will and Harold and I'll also want to take this special opportunity to thank the Commemorative Air Force based in Fleming Field in South Saint Paul where the P-51 C, the historic air plane is housed so to speak in hangar no. 3 and they have a great operation down there as part of the commemorative Air Force and they're really trying to educate the community on what happened in the history of aviation.

MA: We worked for them, there are the ones that got us started.

TK: And I'll like to thank Jim Gilmore who's here in the studio and Don Hynes who is the director down there in the South Saint Paul Air Field. And I'll like to thank you, Micky, for doing your part to contribute to the democratic society that we live in and I'm certainly honored to do this interview with you, we appreciate it.

MA: Thank you.

Transcripción No. 7

Meda Brendall

Civil-Soldadora

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.04951/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Febrero 8, 2003

Duración: 1 hr. 04 min.

Nombre: Meda Montana Hallyburton Brendall

Lugar de nacimiento: Idaho, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Blanca

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Civil

Fecha de servicio: 1941-1945

Ubicación de servicio: Baltimore, Maryland, Estados Unidos

Prisionera de guerra: No

Nota: La civil fue nombrada como la 'soldadora de la semana'

Entrevistadora: Harmett Gill

Colaboradora: Linda Bishop

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: American Legion Post 22, Towson, Maryland

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/4951

Sujetos:

Brendall, Meda Montana

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

Citado como:

Meda Montana Brendall Collection

(AFC/2001/001/4951), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistadora Harmett Gill: Today is Saturday February 8, 2003 and this is the beginning of the interview with Meda Brendall at Towson American Legion Post at 125 York Road at Towson, Maryland. Mrs. Brendall is 92 years old, having been born on September 13, 1911. Our names are Harmett Gill and Michael (no claro) and we'll be the interviewers. Mrs. Brendall, for the recording, could you state what war you served as a shipyard welder.

Meda Brendall: That I didn't understand.

HG: During which war did you served as a civilian in the shipyard?

MB: When I was during the war?, I was welding for Fairfield Shipyard and I weld it, pipe and I did teach first year that I was there because they didn't have anyone to teach welding so I taught welding for about six weeks anyway and then I went into the pipe shop and I did pipes, they brought them to me and took them away and the four years I worked there I never had one to come back because it is art, is art, your welding, art, and that's the way I looked at it.

GH: And this was all during WW2?

MB: Because I wanted to?

GH: It was during WW2?

MB: Yes

GH: We needed that for the recording. At the time, were you married, like were where you at the time?

MB: I was married, yes... that was my son downstairs and he was young, we had long hours, seven days a week, six to four and, but it was still interesting

Otro entrevistador: Did you enjoyed it?

MB: I enjoyed every bit of it, I didn't want to miss a day.

GH: Did you feel at the time, did you wanted to be part, you said you enjoyed it and there are like posters, there were posters at the time that encouraged women and did you feel that spirit that you had to work, as like a woman because it was the first time that...

MB: You mean that I went into with the ad, I was really going to enjoy it or I was not gonna like it?

GH: Like that you really felt... how did you feel about it, did you feel excited that this was an opportunity to maybe women could show something...

MB: Yeah, well, when you are a welder you have to take lessons, I had to take lessons for six weeks and then I had to take exams on every type of metal that you can get and the different, say that they were all different and you start with a nate, you have to had the kind of material you're gonna work for with a nate, you had to learn those things and after I learned I was, let's say... we were allowed to be in the pipe shops so I went over there and the place was larger as this and my table was electrical and every time you hit strike, it's from the table so I started there and I loved it, I liked every bit of it. You had to teach yourself discipline and the people around you.

GH: Where did you lived during the war?

MB: Where did I lived?, I lived on Charles Street at first then I moved to Park Avenue but I lived there because my son could go to church and go to school, that's why I moved there.

GH: Did you had any relatives that were drafted because your son was too young...

MB: I had a... a lady that rented the house and she took care of my son till' I could get home.

GH: Were there other people that you knew that were drafted during the war like, nephews or anything, friends?

MB: No, I didn't know one soul when I went into that shipyard and it was understood, in any job a lady has, you had to use your own discipline and I wasn't there to fool around I was there for the war effort and I was there to weld for our boys overseas and I was proud of it, I didn't have any trouble.

GH: Were you unionized?

MB: No, no, that hadn't started in the war cus', they were so glad to have us.

Otro entrevistador: Did you had any friends that you worked with?

MB: Well, I made friends with two girls, I have the pictures, they have them downstairs, I have my welding outfit on and they did too, we were outside the shop on our brake. (no claro) but she went back to College and she's a professor in a

College and the other girl had serve in a business and the business dropped off so she decided to take up welding so her role place was next to mine and we were friends there and it was sad in a sense when it was over but well.

GH: How did you feel about the war?, like how was your family and your friends feeling about the role you've been playing on?

MB: Being young like I was and I needed the job to make a living, you concern about people but there's so much that you can do and I would feel sorry for them, I would feel sorry, I felt sorry when I hear the bad news on the radio about our boys that made me weld as much harder and that's the way I looked at it.

Otro entrevistador: Did you lived with your friends or like your family?

MB: I didn't had any friends there, when I came up here I didn't had anything (...) I had my son, I had a lady that took care of my son and she was like a mother so she took care, not having anyone when I came home from work, if I had mail she took care of it and if I needed things when she go to the store she got them from me so it was like a temporary thing, I knew it wouldn't last forever but while I was there I wanted to be right.

GH: At the time, did you had a husband?, was he drafted?

MB: Oh, yeah, I had a husband but at that time we weren't getting along too well

GH: In what ways did the war changed your activities, like, other than just having to work seven days a week?

MB: You know, you see those things now but when you work, you go to work, I walked in, change my clothes to welding clothes and I would come out and I plugged in, I mean I am working and I turned my machines on and the work would start coming in and I would looked at it, I put my rods out for the ones I thought would do the... and you had to be careful, so you didn't had time to worry about other people, you had something in front of you that meant a life, it meant a life, maybe... I didn't weld it right, maybe that was the very one that would ruin the whole thing, so I did not had one single piece of my work come back at me while I worked because I felt like, when you knocked the slag off, if you know what slag means, when you weld, you have a little metal that gathers and comes to the top and you take your steer brush and you brush it off and your weld is there, you

could tell is there's a hole, better not be one, you weld it, if it was welded on to a flange, you know what a flange is?, around the other thing that holds the pipe to that, that's the meaning of welding, to holding, the way it holds and if it's a good weld you don't had to worry about it, just sent it right out.

GH: Would you say that maybe like what women were doing in the shipyard, all the different things that were going on were just as important as the men were doing overseas, like they were fighting?

MB: Well, see, we had different groups that, I don't call it policing but you could call it that, there was always discipline, there was always more to do whether you were a lady or you were a gentlemen and we had few elderly men out there that had welded all their lives, well they, if they liked you nobody bothered you so I was their peanut, they called me peanut and no way that nobody ever bothered me, so I enjoyed what I did, enjoyed that my work was going out and wasn't coming back, I would enquire about our boys overseas, it was sad when I hear, I cried but that was war, that was a bad war.

GH: How did you like, entertained yourself like, outside the work?

MB: I liked art and I did some art work and I had a piano and I liked to play the piano, I did a little bit of that, then later on I took up the organ and when I married my high school sweetheart, after all this was over with, he was a minister and I played for him in his church, of course out of the picture, don't put that down (risas) but you didn't had any friends, you're tired when you get home, fix something to eat, you can't wait to have a bath and then you fall into bed but you had to go by rules.

GH: Was you son also a way of comforting you?

MB: He belonged to a few things and the lady saw that he was entertained and he had a little radio and he liked to do art work and did a lot of drawing and things like that but he was good, I didn't had to worry because he knew I was working for a living, he was good, he still is (risas)

Otro entrevistador: Did you worry about the war, did you worry like did when (no claro), did you worry about that?

MB: I was worried about something would happen to me or what would happen to

my boy... you don't know, if you have children all they want is their mom's cares, mom loves me, mom is working for me but if I had, if I get through and work early I would go home early and maybe go to a movie but I enjoyed my work, I wouldn't take anything for the time that I spent at Fairfield Shipyard welding for our boys, ever... ever anything can take that away from me.

GH: Did you knew anyone who was killed during the war?, did you hear about someone close to you?

MB: All the ones I knew had passed on, you see I'm 91 so you can imagine if they were maybe two years older than I did, they would be 95, 94, 95 but I was really, I think I was borderline being the older one of the three girls that... and there's a little jealousy sometimes, sometimes I had to smack, I smack a girl one time...

GH: Really?, can we hear the story about it?

MB: You know, they didn't allow cursing, using profanity and she kept saying things and I said, 'I wish you wouldn't do that, it bothers me', she said, 'Do your work' and she said another word, I said, 'You do that again or I smack you', she said, 'You wouldn't got the nerve' and at that time she hit the floor, she didn't call anymore names because they don't allow it, they didn't allowed it, I didn't wanted to ruin my both, let her go someplace else and do it. It's ok, I mean, there were so much work to do, say there was welding, there was doing different testing work, they had the big cattles that they were welding with... and I was learning to do that but I didn't work over before I got to that but they were, there was a (no claro) you had to learn and you had your rot there, your flame at the same time but you're doing the work on the thing, I just learned to do that but there's no any entertainment in this job, in that job, no entertainment, it's work, you come to work, you come to work in the snow, you go home in the snow, it rains, you don't call in, you get on that straight and get down there and when you checked in, things like that, so, to me I worked hard and the Maritime Commission gave this right here, gave me that because I was... they gave me that and John Brown, and he's the one who took me down, they gave me, there was dinner, not just for me but the welders that from Fairfield and when I was welding, the maritime people came and asked me if I would weld something for them and I said, 'Well, I'll ask my boss', and my boss was standing

behind me, he's the one that put them up to it so they put some welding on, on a little platform, they told me to put these two pieces of metal together and they had shaved them down so they would fit this right, so I said, 'Put them up there, drop your shield', and I weld it, overhead, I handed it to them and knocked the slag off and they shook the head and said, 'You got a job on the Maritime Commission now', so Harold asked me if I go down to John Brown and I did, and they gave me this for my work I did down there, fifty years ago, they almost lay me down before they gave it to me (risas), no, they were nice people.

Otro entrevistador: Did you burned yourself at all?, did you get any wounds from, like, burning yourself?

MB: No (risas)

GH: And other girls, sometimes end up... do you have stories of this girl that burned her finger or something.

MB: Well, I'll tell you what happens, some... at that time people had the idea that it wasn't a respectable job. I had my high school education, I was from a good family, I belonged to the best clubs in town but I couldn't get a job only 50 cents a day and I could live on it. So my dad encouraged me and nobody in the world could be better, he says, 'They are giving lessons, why don't you take them?', you like stuff like that', so I did. But some of my friends, that I played bridge with, they were kind of looked under their nose... they thought it was a little degrading for a Hallyburton to be doing something like that. So one day, when I was welding, it had snowed like it snowed here the other day so I asked my boss if I could take, leave my boots on, he said, 'Certainly you can, just don't... be careful going home'. I got on this streetcar, it was loaded with people and I looked and there was one little vacant seat but a lady like this... I was clean, I had changed my clothes but she saw those boots so she didn't say sit down or have a seat or whatever so I just ran over and sat down, she did this way (indicando inconformidad y haciéndose a un lado), I thought, 'Geez...' When we got off, I started to get off in my stop and she looked up at me and she says, 'Oh, you a welder', I said, 'Yes, ma'm and I'm proud of it and I don't have...' See, what did I said?, 'I don't have a disease', or something like that I said to her... 'I'm not contagious', that's what I said. I said, 'Yes, I am and I'm proud

of it and by the way I'm not contagious', well, she kept moving like. I put that on a paper. Well, the bus driver heard me say that, I thought he would fall out of his seat, he just fell out, he laughed and laughed. But you see, you could laugh and say silly things but it was sad and I loved it, not from the sadness but I loved that I could be there, to help, with that little bit I did to help, that's what I was there for.

GH: What effect the war had on you mental health or physical health?

MB: Well, in a way, you're stressed out to begin with and to do other things you don't do them, you don't do any other things, you don't have time and if you do you're so tired, you're afraid you cannot do the right... I could've worked on the office, I did typing, sort in, but I didn't wanted to do that, so I made and I worked until it came over the intercom: 'The war is over'. We all shouted but we cried because that was our jobs... though, I had a long talk with my boss and he says, 'I would do anything in the world I can for you'. He called social security, they took me over there in a little car that they have outside of work and I took the Social Service exam, passed it, put me on work the next day, so I worked four years for Social Security. So that's my life (risas)

GH: What do you remember like the most about all the time you were welding?

MB: Well, I remember most... you don't dwell on those things. I'll just said, 'Let this one be right', 'Let this load to take the ship over', so we would have enough to take care of the boys. We were all that way, we all prayed that the war would soon end and that this killing stop, stop... but the friendship was very sparse but you liked them, we cried when we said goodbye, we knew we would never see each other again, that was sad. The secretaries and my boss and you walked out the door, wiping tears away and there was, you don't look back because that's it, no looking back.

GH: After the war ended, did you feel like the need to move?, like did you feel like there is anything else I need to do now, did you feel like one part of your life was gone. You were not welding anymore and it's interesting how you feel like you never gonna go back, you never going to...

MB: If they would call me tomorrow I would go. If they call me and our boys and our girls need help as long as my mind would stay with me and my health I would

weld until the last drop, that's what I think of... our war effort, I think it was a success, a good success, a good thing that we did it, it's a good thing we were brought in it, it's a good thing they showed the world that they can do things too, oh, it's dirty work!, well, making a pie can be dirty work so I just looked at it, so I get dirty, there's soap (risas) but that's one little thing but I don't regret it, no... sometimes I wish I could just see someone, say hi, how are you?

Otro entrevistador: You had contact with anybody that you worked?

MB: No, there was anyone... there was one boy and his wife, she wasn't a welder but she was a tacker, a tacker is, you probably know what that is, they bring work to you, is there, it's not need to be warped so you tag here, tag there, then the welder comes and make the pipe warped and she would do that, some days she get through earlier and she would go up and she would do a little work in the office, so they made work for her, they were nice, it was good. No, I have no regrets, no regrets whatsoever. They were good to me, they made me take a picture 'Welder of the Week', that's downstairs in the foyer... Then all these few other things, I don't know why they did it but I worked for the Maritime Commission as well, I mean, this as well as... they had a social group there that was like their... looking after the different ones, they were frightened, people were frightened, they were frightened of each other and they were so afraid they wouldn't do their work right and they used to say, 'Rosie the Riveter', I said, 'Don't call me Rosie the Riveter, I am not Rosie the Riveter', all respects to her job, I worked too hard to be called Rosie the Riveter (risas)

GH: How would you describe the different ways that your life, like, changed...

MB: It didn't changed, my life didn't changed, I'm still Meda Hallyburton, that was my maiden name. It didn't changed, is how you looked at it, how you go about things, how you declare, you could go in a room and say, 'I'm not like this', but I liked what I was doing, didn't changed me, I felt like it was a plus on my life, I wouldn't change it for anything and it's just like little things I don't want to put this on here (risas) I think my luck go well, what else?

Otro entrevistador: Did you feel like, once the war started, you will not have much time with your son as you did?

MB: You know, there a little thing, you didn't say time, there were times when I worried about how my clock went off in the morning and you hear the whistle in the afternoon, I did, I had an hour to get home, that's something that worried me and if you had your own, that was welfare almost then, they would send you little coupons for the week so you go down and spend what you could for your food and sometimes I let my little boy go down, of course It wasn't far, he came back with a chicken, you don't, you never got chickens too often, well, that thing was older than I am (risas), that was the worst chicken I had ever seen, ever smelled, I wrapped that thing with a piece of paper and I said, 'Come on honey, let's go to the store', the man saw me coming and try to hide, he thought I wouldn't know anything about it, I threw it over the counter, I said, 'You better find me a chicken and find it fast', he found it, he found a good one, he thought I wouldn't know the difference, he knew, I didn't have to worry anymore.

GH: He never did it ever again

MB: But they would try to slip... if you were getting ten or twelve potatoes, they put the rotten ones in the bottom and put you three or four good ones on top. I made him put them all down on the counter.

Otro entrevistador: So you checked those kind of things?

MB: I said, 'I'll take these here', all the good ones, I said, 'These are rotten'. You had to do it. 50 cents a day. I thought it wasn't much but then I think, '50 cents a day I was down the northern line' (risas) but I wouldn't change it now, no, no, ever, ever, and if anybody stands up and talks about the shipyard workers and women should have their heads examined, they should have their heads examined. My boss, at social security, didn't liked my outwork way so I'm looking down over the bay, there was this dirt, there was dirt down through there just not anything, he walked out at behind me and he says, 'Well, you're wasting time', I said, 'No, sir, this is my break', he says, 'Well, let me tell you something, where you said you were from?', and I said, 'I'm from North Carolina', he says, 'Yeah, I hear where your bell is and you southerners come up here and try to run the town of Baltimore', I turned around and said, 'Mr. Williams, if it hadn't been people like me you wouldn't be standing right there', and they ran me from Mrs. Victory from Social Security, he

voted for me but he said I was right, he said, 'You were right' and he was sorry he said it but I don't know.

GH: So did you face lots of those kind of things?, of course you mentioned the woman in the streetcar and there's, you know, your boss...

MB: You mean me changing clothes or...

GH: No, I'm saying did you, like, faced these things a lot like when like you mentioned this woman in the streetcar, you know, kinda looked down at you, your friends looked down at you...

MB: Well, there's... the people that were around me, even though they weren't from the shipyard, they didn't appreciate what she did and a lot of them saw it, even a man got up his seat because he knew that I welded and he was no worker, he worked somewhere else and I told him I appreciate it and I said, 'It's people like you that show respect that makes the world go around, thank you so much'.

GH: In your life, would you say that your time welding was the best part that you ever had?

MB: No, I'd say it's one of the best parts because I loved my music, I loved the piano and I loved... we used to put up shows in school, I loved that (risas)

GH: Is there anything else you wanna talk about that we left out about your welding?

MB: Well, there's not much... we didn't have many much food and if you had a sandwich you could shared it, if you had a coke you poured it four ways just if they had that much. You didn't see ham, cheese, all that, if anyone had two sandwiches they cut it, a lot of times I didn't have, I would sometimes, someone would brought me a little sandwich. You don't said where this piece of junk come from, that was like gold and then you got used to... some of the men's wires fix me a little (no claro) and if it was real good I would take it home to my boy and he eat it, see, that's how you do things. But I don't have, as adding anything to the welding and what I did, it was our work, respect for out country, love for our boys, the people that were over there fighting. I didn't have anything against Germany, I wish they could, they didn't have to fight too, that's just... there's a lot of things, the word welding was like a staple to some people, they hung on to it and did not want to

talk about it because they were afraid somebody would say something, that a woman was not supposed to be doing that, well, I don't care what they say, come to me and said, 'Don't talk about me behind my back', they didn't say very much, cus' I don't believe in that, if you have anything to say, say it to them. I'm pleased with what I've done, God helped me through all of it, I couldn't have done it alone.

GH: Is there anything left that you wanna say?

MB: No, not really, there are things you think but you don't say them but I'm grateful that that war part was over before it got, it was just up in Europe and anywhere else but we brought right were we started, after all that that I went through, my son was wounded in Korea, I didn't hear from him, about four days and these people had these short ways, called me from down in Texas or somewhere that he was on the ship toward Japan, the ship was hit by another ship, they transferred him, put him on an airline and the airline plane didn't land where it was supposed to, stormy weather, then he was in Japan for eight months and I didn't get to see him... you know I went through, going to welding was hoy but to know your boy was somewhere suffering and you can't get to him, well he practically lost one foot but they did all kinds of surgery and he still has the foot but he walks crippled (...) When I think about my son, he was married, he has children but like I told him I will never interfere, is just like anything else, that's his life. I've had my life, I'm not worrying but sometimes you do because circumstances make it that way, that's the way I look at life right now and with him circumstances have made it that he's in home with mom again and I thank God for it because I understand it more than a lot of people do and if I can do that part as well I thought I did my welding, if I take care of my son, not comparing the two but the thing that I can take care of him and I told him, I said, 'Keep in your mind, I like to tease, I like a little nit of fun now and then'... that's the way life is, that's the way what you do with your life like a lot of people said to me, 'Why would you take up welding?, why are you doing that?, there are so many things you could do', I said, 'Tell me one', because there was rough times back then, 37, 38, 39, you couldn't find a job, anything. I'm working typing something to my grandfather, he was a magister and there was a lawyer there and I did a little bit of work for him, 50 cents, well, you

could get a loaf of bread for a nickel, a gallon of milk for 10 cents, that took 15 cents out of my 50 so you had to pay your rent if you didn't have a house, it was hard and welding was the answer and if I could just knocked it on the people saying, 'It's not a disgraceful talent, it's not a dirty job, it's what you make it and it's a nice job, I enjoyed it and I wouldn't trade...', someone said I give you a thousand dollars for that the same, I said, 'keep it'. I did have quite a few pictures, they were in a fire and burned up, so what I had left over I gave them to downstairs.

Transcripción No. 8

Helen Brown

Civil-Remachadora

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.01901/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Septiembre 4, 2002

Duración: 16 min.

Nombre: Helen R. Brown

Lugar de nacimiento: Rosedale, Virginia Occidental, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Virginia, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Sin especificar

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Civil

Ubicación de servicio: Akron, Ohio, Estados Unidos

Prisionera de guerra: No

Entrevistador: Harold Phillips

Colaboradora: Rebecca Ebert

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives, Handley Regional Library

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/1901

Sujetos:

Brown, Helen R.

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

Citado como:

Helen R. Brown Collection

(AFC/2001/001/1901), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistador Harold Phillips: War history interview of WWII veterans conducted by Harold Phillips for the Handley Library Archives and the Winchester Frederick County Historical Society. Today is the 4th of September, 2002. The interviewee is Mrs. Helen Brown.

Helen Brown: I'm Helen Brown, born April the 5th, 1925, at Rosedale, West Virginia, which was a little oil town in the central part of West Virginia. Then I went to elementary school in a one-room schoolhouse in a little place called Walker, West Virginia. Then I graduated from high school in 1944. WWII was deep into war with Japan and Germany. Uncle Sam was on every billboard and posed, pointing his finger at us, saying, "I need you." Of course, I thought that meant me. There was very few young men in our community. We didn't have proms or yearbooks during the year, war years; and when I was a senior in school I had two brothers in the Navy and the Army. One went in the Navy at 17. Of course, Rick and I were planning to be married when the war was over. Rick was in the Philippines at the time. I boarded a bus with \$20.00 in my pocket, my purse to Akron, Ohio and was hired at Goodyear Aircraft and had the privilege of joining the flying squadron, a group of ladies who would work in every department in the plant. We were also offered night classes which I took advantage of. I worked as Rosie the Riveter, any mechanics on the Corsair, office work, payroll, where we, anywhere we were needed, except the paint shop. We were paid \$1.97 when the war ended August the 14th, 1945. During the war were the, during the war was the saddest days of my life. Every day was filled with anxiety, not knowing, not knowing there was, not knowing if our family and friends would return. Families placed a white square in your window with a blue star; and if your loved one was killed in service, you replaced with a gold star. It was a terrible, sad day when a blue star turned to gold. During the war we needed rationing stamps for most everything: leather shoes, gasoline, nylon hose, many groceries. We lived on a farm and had most of our fruits, vegetables, and meat. If, as young people, couldn't get, could get a gallon of gas, we would get to a friend's house, listen to records, exchange books, or whatever. We had one class in school where we learned to knit sweaters for the

soldiers. I was left-handed, so my sweater was always wrong side out. We sent many letters to servicemen. Of course, I wrote Rick every day. I received 500 letters from him, kept 50 and have misplaced them somehow. While at Akron we would go downtown to the USO, United Service Organization, where several military service boys would be. There were very few cars. We rode buses everywhere. Sometimes you would wait for a second and third bus, but as they were full, sitting and standing. There was very little communications during the war. We either heard a radio from some of our famous broadcasters or newspapers. But we had to get our newspapers a day behind because we got them by mail. They were not delivered in the country. That's what I had there.

HP: Where you recruited to go to Akron?

HB: No

HP: Or did you just hear?

HB: After high school, just a lot of the people went. A lot of the girls went because there weren't any guys to work. And everything was turned into a, into a, a plant. There was many plants there in Akron. There was a tire and rubber plant. There was, but Goodyear Aircraft was the only one that finished a plant.

HP: Did you have friend that were there that you could stay with?

HB: Yes, I did have.

HP: Was it a common practice before the war for girls to leave like that and go to work?

HB: No. Oh, no. No, you didn't do that very often.

HP: So this was something new?

HB: Something different.

HP: Yeah.

HB: And very adventurous, I'd say, because I, you know, you find lots of... the thing, but there weren't any young men around, so you didn't, you know, they were all either older.

HP: Did you feel apprehensive about leaving all your...?

HB: No. Because I had a friend there that had been working in one of the other plants, in the tire and rubber plant and we were well-respected in the plants. We

were. And we were, you know, asked to do many, many things; so you just jumped in and did them.

HP: Did I understand that you said, you were talking about Corsair?

HB: Yes.

HP: The airplane?

HB: Yes. They finished it right there in the plant. It was so nice to see one fly away because you'd helped on it.

HP: And what was your job?

HB: Well, I did some, I did was Rosie the Riveter, awhile. I worked in the, well, you just worked, our group worked everywhere. We worked in the, in the cafeterias. I remember running a cash register in the cafeteria. I remember doing night jobs. We would be on night shift, and work in the office and do all kinds of office work. I felt kind of prepared for that.

HP: And what was the riveting like?

HB: Well, that was...

HP: What did you actually do?

HB: You actually riveted. Yeah. You had a, you had to have safety shoes. You had to have your head covered with, usually, a bandana or something; and then you had to, you had your riveting machines. We used them.

HP: Was it a power tool?

HB: Yes. Oh, yes.

HP: Like an air hammer?

HB: Yes. Yes, and we learned to, if you didn't watch out, you could run a nail over wrong, I know, because there were several ruined in our, in their department because you were too, trying to think you had to really work at it, when you just had to let it work itself.

HP: You brought the ration books in. Was it, and there are quite a few stamps left inside of...

HB: Well, see, we lived in the country, and we didn't need a lot for the vegetables, or the foods that you would need if you lived in the city. So we did have those left.

HP: It wasn't that they gave you so many coupons.

HB: No. Oh, no. You run out all the time, especially if you had very many in your family.

HP: Well, we were able to get lots of coupons because the older brothers went into the armed services.

HB: Yes.

HP: So we would empty out the book with all their coupons before they left.

HB: That's right. That's the way we did with my brothers', too.

HP: Yeah.

HB: Yes.

HP: You mentioned the USO.

HB: Yes.

HP: Did they have a band there, recorded music, or what was that like?

HB: Gosh, you know, I don't remember. I believe it was a band; and it was up over another building, but it was the whole size of the building. It was big.

HP: And were those usually GI's coming home on leave and then they went down to the USO.

HB: Yeah. Right.

HP: Did you have any trains pulling through there, like troop trains that would sometimes...?

HB: No. But when my brother left, I went to the bus to see him leave. Everybody left by bus at our home because that's all that was there. There wasn't a train in the county where we lived, so everybody left by bus; and that was the hardest thing for me to do was to see my brothers off.

HP: Was there any trouble keeping up with the mail? You said you got quite a few letters.

HB: Oh, no.

HP: Did they come in batches or...?

HB: Well, sometimes. I think when Rick went overseas he got 30 from me because I had written him every day, at one time. But we, I got them pretty often, and sometimes I'd get two or three. That was always nice.

HP: When the war ended, did the job end, as well?

HB: Oh, yes. The day the war ended, you didn't make any more planes. It went into something else. But I came home at that time.

HP: Did they actually lay off the women workers?

HB: Oh, yes. Everybody left because they weren't making any more, especially the Corsair because all it was a fighter plane.

HP: Did you ever meet any of the pilots that flew them?

HB: No. We met several celebrities that would come visit the plant, but I don't think I ever met any of the pilots. No. They were all there, I guess while we were there, they were serving.

HP: Do you remember any of the money raising drives that they had, like war bonds and stamps?

HB: Oh, yes. War bonds were big. That's why the celebrities were always at the plant or would come through and stop. And you'd pay 10 cents for a stamp, you know, and then you'd fill your book.

HP: Get an \$18.75?

HB: Right. Right. \$18.75. And it was, it was tough because there was no one around, and transportation was bad. Communication was bad, and there wasn't really much to do. What you did, you just had to do, find on your own.

HP: Were there any social functions aimed at raising money?

HB: No. Not any that I remember.

HP: Well, you said cake walks.

HB: Yeah. Well, we had those, but that wasn't for the service. We did a lot of that in the country where we lived.

HP: Just to raise money.

HB: That's usually for the schools because our schools were very small.

HP: You graduated in '44?

HB: '44.

HP: Yeah. Did the school have difficulty getting teachers prior to that?

HB: Well, I think they always had a hard time getting teachers back then because that's when you didn't really have to attend college too long to get a school. But

some of our, I think, was poor teaching in those days. But we've made it. But you worked at it.

HP: Maybe there wasn't as much to learn in those days.

HB: That's right. But I went to school at night when I was up there, and we had great teachers for that, though, because we had, like, some of the professionals, of course, were there that taught our night classes.

HP: Did you want to go home when the war ended, or would you rather have stayed on and worked?

HB: I hated to go back into Hills, West Virginia. But it was home, and that was good. And we had a nice home, wonderful parents, and so forth. But my brothers didn't get home then. It was much later when they got home.

HP: And how much later did Rick get home?

HB: He got home in May of '56, '46, and we got home in April, and we got married in May of '46.

HP: Do you think your work, your time on the job was any value to you? Did it teach you anything, or did you learn anything from it?

HB: Yeah. I... yes. Because you had to associate with people, and you had to work with people every day, and that was nice. You found out who would work and who wouldn't work, and we had lots of, lots of young teachers and people that were in college, but they came to work to get money to go to college on. So that was, it was, yeah, it was very rewarding.

HP: Was there anything unique about the squadron that you were in, or was that just a work group?

HB: Well, that was a work group and, of course, we all went to school at night. And one or two girls I remember from Southern West Virginia, they had been to school a couple of years or a year, and they were going back to school; and I remember they just needed the money very badly. I think, though, with the sacrifices we made in those years has really, was really rewarding for us because you had to use your faith. You lived with faith, alone, almost, because that's all we had.

HP: Did you get any kind of mustering out pay or...?

HB: No.

HP: Nothing?

HB: The last check.

HP: Last check.

HB: Last check. I'd saved some money while we were there. We had used it on furniture when we were married, a little bit of it, whatever I had. And it was tough years, but they were rewarding years; and the sacrifices these guys made was unreal. Of course, you knew that.

HP: Do you have anything more you'd like to add?

HB: No, except Rick and I got married and have had a wonderful life together, and I think a lot of it had to do with the sacrifices we made then.

HP: He was worth waiting for?

HB: Oh, yes.

HP: Can you think of anything you might want to add?

Rick: Nothing, except she chased me halfway around the world.

HB: He chased around, but I was there when he come home. That was the thing. Those were the important things.

HP: Well, thank you very much.

HB: Well, you're certainly welcome. When I moved to Winchester, I met a young lady, Linda Taylor, and her mother had worked in the same shop as I had in the paint shop; and I have never met anyone else that has ever worked there, except the friends that were working there when I went there, that I still know as a family that had gone there because the war, they couldn't live there.

HP: When you first started on the job it was probably rather exciting, but how about after a while?

HB: It was exciting, but I never got tired of it because it was, I was in a group that went from one job to another, and we never got tired of one job. Every six weeks they moved us into another job. So, you learned lots of jobs, and cooperate with other people, and to follow directions. That was one of the big things that was very hard to, for many people to do, and...

HP: Were there ever any labor disputes or hassles?

HB: No. I don't remember ever any, having any disputes on the lines; and, of course, the lines, you know, you worked down the lines all the way to the finishing end, and that was interesting. But I wouldn't want to do plant work all my life. That's...

HP: How did your salary compare to...?

HB: I was making, when I finished I was making \$1.97 an hour, and that was big time money at a day.

HP: That was a lot, that was considerably higher than a woman could get in a retail store?

HB: Oh, yeah, probably. I never worked in a retail store at that time, you know?. But it was, you felt like you, like you had something to give to the war...during that time, and you were contributing something. It's sad. We had so many friends that was killed, too. Of course, everyone did. Their families all came home.

HP: Thanks again.

HB: Well, you're welcome.

Transcripción No. 9

Eva Romero

Army Air Forces/Corps

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.18443/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Febrero 8, 2003

Duración: 33 min.

Nombre: Eva Romero Jacques

Lugar de nacimiento: Trinidad, Colorado, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: California, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Hispana

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fechas de servicio: 1943-1945

Entrada al servicio: Enlistada

Rama del servicio: Army Air Forces/Corps

Unidad de servicio: Far East Air Side Command

Ubicación de servicio: Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia; Warrensburg, Missouri; Nueva Guinea, Filipinas; Frente del Pacífico

Rango mayor: Sargento del estado mayor

Prisionera de guerra: No

Entrevistadora: Aislinn Froeb

Colaboradora: Alexandra Walter

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: St. Helena Youth Leadership Group

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/18443

Sujetos:

Jacques, Eva Romero

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

United States. Army Air Forces/Corps.

Citado como:

Eva Romero Jacques Collection

(AFC/2001/001/18443), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistadora Aislinn Froeb: I'm Aislinn Froeb, at February 8, 2003, and today she's gonna tell us about her war years. Can you please talk about how you were first involved?

Eva Romero: Well, I was attending College at the University of New Mexico, I was a junior and I thought, when war was declared all the guys enlisted, they went to register right away and so the campus was like a girl's school and some of the girls got interested in trying to join so we, our requirements were to be, to weight a 100 pounds, be a High School graduate and 21 years old and you had to be 5 feet tall, I was 4,11 and didn't think they were gonna take me but because I had three years of College and I was bilingual they took me and so I went to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia for basic training and they asked me if I wanted to go to OCS but I didn't want to go, I didn't feel comfortable, I don't like people what to do and I rather be the door so they sent me to a Military Administrative Academy because we had to learn the language of the military for business purposes and I worked as an, in the office, commander's office all the time I was in the service so it came in handy and again they asked me if I wanted to OCS and I didn't so then I was shipped overseas, we had a choice and I went to New Guinea and the Philippines, I spent 1943 in New Guinea and, I mean 1944 in New Guinea and 1945 in the Philippines.

AF: Can you tell me about your training experiences?

ER: My training, the basic training was primarily marching and learning discipline and we were, close to were to learn how to store our stuff and we had our double bag switch where our only carry all because we had everything in there, all our possessions were in there and before we went overseas we had to train to climb a big tall wall, you know like climb over and then we had to go in the wilderness because they knew where we were heading but we didn't and learn how to cope with the mother nature, you know. So when we, when I left they didn't tell where we going ahead, I had no idea where I was headed and we went to a troop train from the base, from Missouri to San Francisco, took us five days and five nights on the

troop train, there were about 4,000 people on there and so it was kind of crowded but we were all excited, you know.

AF: Do you remember your instructors?

ER: My instructors?

AF: From your training?

ER: No, no.

AF: How did you get through, did you had family?, did you had boyfriend?

ER: Lots of boyfriends (risas), I didn't go with any one in particular, I had lots of friends, I did become engaged before I went overseas and he went to Officers Candidates School, he wanted, he begged me to go but I didn't wanted to go, so when he came back we got engaged and then he was shipped overseas and right after I was shipped, we went to the opposites directions and he never came back, he was in a plane crash, so I still kept his ring...

AF: Why in particular did your joined?, because you were, you thought that was your duty?

ER: Well, I thought about... it was something very new, you know, when war was declared we were very patriotic in New Mexico, everybody was really, like 9/11, you know, something like that and I went to mass one Sunday and the priest asked the mothers to please don't interfere if your daughters are willing to go into the military, to please don't keep them from going because it's everybody's war and that set me off, so I thought about it overnight, next day I enlisted.

AF: Do you remember arriving in WWII?

ER: Yes, I remember, I arrived about 8 pm and the dining, the mess hall was closed so the lieutenants would pick me up in a staff car, I was the only one that came in that night and she took me to the dining room and I had the best meal, I thought, 'My goodness this is wonderful!', you know, I was the only one eating over there and she asked me, right away she asked me if I was going to OCS and I said, 'I don't think so but I'll think about it' and they were very nice. We had a lot of training because the military was very, very strange to all of us, none of us had, were aware of anything military so we had to learn from scratch, everything.

AF: And where exactly did you go when you first arrived?

ER: Pardon?

AF: Where exactly did you go?

ER: I was in Fort Oglethorpe for basic training and then I was transported to Warrensburg, Missouri it was Sedella Army Air Field and I worked for the base commander and it was very nice, very nice experience.

AF: And when you arrived overseas, what do you remember about that?

ER: Well, when we boarded the ship, there were quite a few people on board, around 5,000, I think and there were five decks on the ship, that was the Lurline, which is a luxury liner now, it was a luxury liner then but they took all the mirror walls and the carpets and everything, the chandeliers, everything they just... it was a plain old ship and we were all there, crowded nine to a cabin and the cabins were pretty small for nine people so most of us sleep on deck at night but after five o'clock, after sunset we weren't allowed to smoke or light a match or... it was dark, blackouts, you know, so that was kind of strange but it was nice, the trip there took a whole month because we were zigzagging across the Pacific to avoid the torpedoes and it took us a whole month from San Francisco to New Guinea and we didn't stop anywhere, we arrived there and we were so disappointed, the women specially, because there wasn't a post office, no drugstore, no nothing, nothing, strictly uncivilized, no buildings, no roads, they were just building the roads, the CBs and our accommodations were a cement platform with half a tent cover and we had an army cot with one mattress cover, period, no pillow, no sheet, no blankets, no nothing but we had a mosquito net over it because the mosquitoes were wild and they didn't want us to catch malaria so that was it. I mean it was hot, a 110 degrees all the time, that was the average degree, we come home, we go to work around six o'clock in the morning and then come home around eleven and take a shower and eat and go back to work at two and then come back and... we took three showers a day because it was so hot but we had dehydrated food all the time, there was no refrigeration, nothing, we had dehydrated food and canned stuff all the time and so we didn't have anything nice, you know, they didn't have any refrigerator, you know they couldn't have anything else but dehydrated so we survived...

AF: Did you...?

ER: Pardon?

AF: Did you adjust well?

ER: Yes, we had to, we had to. One time they told us, we were gonna have some Coca Cola and we were all so happy that we went, we were standing in line with our canteens and they come and they put a tablespoon of dry powder or something other and it made us all sick (risas), it was awful!, it was hot, they had no ice!, oh boy!

AF: And what was your job assignment?

ER: Well, I worked for base commander there.

AF: Did you, can you tell us about that?

ER: Well, I did some of the top secret information, when I was, when they had any...

AF: Can you tell us about that?

ER: Well, I don't remember the exact things now, it's been 60 years but they had, when they had any censoring in Spanish mail they sent it to me, we had to censor everything that went out because they didn't want anything to leak out, you know, or secrets services.

AF: And you said there was no post office, how long was it to get mail?

ER: Oh, my goodness!, we used to get mail call once a month and they would bring three big bags full of mail for us, for the women and we had to sit out in the sun, they didn't sort it out first, we had to wait to see, maybe we were the last ones down and some people didn't get any mail, you know, it was sad, sitting down in the sun waiting for your mail.

AF: Did you see any combat?

ER: No, we... I heard snipers at night when we were sleeping in our tents but no, we weren't that close to that.

AF: So there were no casualties...?

ER: No, no.

AF: What are some of your most memorable experiences?

ER: Well, it's been so long... In New Guinea, we went, we met the natives there

and they were all very nice, they couldn't speak English of course and some of the little children just come around and look around and one of the guys thought them how to sing one of the English songs that was popular then, it was called 'Pistol Packin' Mama' and the children sang it so beautifully and they didn't know what they were singing but they were so cute and then one time one of the guys had some trouble with his Jeep, he couldn't make the low gear work, so kept asking his friends that went by, 'Do you know anything about low gears?, mine just won't function', and so this native was listening, all he could hear was 'low gear' so he went home and named his baby 'low gear', he thought it was such a pretty word.
(risas)

AF: Did you form friendships with the natives?

ER: Well, they were all very... they smiled at us, we couldn't communicate but they were naked, you know and so we had some of our photographers took some pictures of them and I had hold of some and when I took them home my mother saw them and she said, 'What are you doing with these naked people?, pictures of naked people?', and she burned them (risas), I was so unhappy, they were my souvenirs and so, everybody was very nice, we were very compatible, we get along beautifully, I don't remember anyone arguing about anything, we took it as it came, you know, whatever, whatever it was.

AF: Did you have any dances, any...?

ER: Oh, yeah!, yes, yes, yes, we had a big recreation hall and we had music all the time, every night we had dancing, we were happy.

AF: And did you had lots of boyfriends?

ER: Yes, lots of them, when you are young... (risas)

AF: Were you awarded any medals or other awards?

ER: Yes, I had six ribbons and a bronze star.

AF: Can you tell us anything about them?

ER: Well, they just assigned... they just, when we were discharged, they just handed them to us and I, I don't remember any particular ones. The bronze medal was for the Philippine liberation campaign and everybody had the good conduct medal... several other campaigns, I got six of them.

AF: You stayed in touch with your family?

ER: Did I what?

AF: Stayed in touch with your family?

ER: Oh, yes.

AF: And you thought that was good?

ER: Yeah, well, I had my sister stationed in West Point and I used to write to her all the time and we were completely out of soap, we got soap from Australia, Lifebuoy soap and Lifebuoy soap isn't like ours, I don't know if you know about Lifebuoy soap, that was the only soap that was available over there and it was, it smelled awful, you know, so I wrote my sister to send me some soap and she sent me a whole box full of all kinds, you know.

AF: Did you have plenty of supplies?

ER: Yeah, yes.

AF: It was never shortenings anything like that?

ER: No, we never... no.

AF: Did you feel pressure or stress?

ER: No.

AF: Was there something special for you for good luck?, did you prayed?, did you...?

ER: Oh, yeah, I've always been a prayer, in fact, before I went overseas, I used to go to daily mass and a lot of the young men were getting married before they went overseas so the priest used to call me, there was another guy that used to go to mass, and we used to come in and signed the marriage certificate, they needed some witnesses, so our names are in a lot of those marriage licenses and I still keep in touch with this guy, he lives in Oregon and for sixty years now we've been sending Christmas cards to each other.

AF: Do you keep in touch with many people you met?

ER: No, nobody else, nobody else... my friends, my girlfriends all got married and I don't know their last names, you know, we didn't keep in touch, it's too bad, I'm so sorry about that.

AF: Do you, would you want them to come up?

ER: I would like to, that would be fun. I was hoping we find some here but... nobody.

AF: I'm sorry, if we could help you find them...

ER: Oh, yeah.

AF: How did people entertain themselves besides dances and karaoke and bars?

ER: That was the only thing and there was, we had movies, no we didn't... we had like Bob Hope, you know, like these people used to come in and perform for us and that was about it.

AF: Where there plenty of books to read?

ER: No books whatsoever.

AF: No reading material?

ER: No, on the ship there was one little book that everybody read, I think it was all sorted out by the time everybody got through with it, that was all, there was one little book on for 4,000 people and you know some people like to read, they just don't take anything so we didn't take anything, they were no books in New Guinea, no books whatsoever.

AF: What were you able to take?

ER: Oh, we couldn't take anything; all we had to take was our clothes, that's about it, just our clothes, our canteen, our gas mask.

AF: What did you do when you were on leave?

ER: We didn't had any when I was overseas, before I went over, I went to see my sister in New York before I left, before I shipped out and that was fun, I hadn't been to New York before so...

AF: Did you travel anywhere while on service?

ER: Well, no, we weren't allowed to do that, we weren't. At one time I signed for and air flight that was just going oversee the New Guinea jungles and so I signed out for it but I was on duty that night so I didn't go and the plane crashed in the jungle and it took forty two days to find it and there were three survivors, one girl and two boys survived and they were walking around the jungle, eating whatever they could find for forty two days and when they came back, this young lady, she was so beautiful, she was like Gene Tierney, I don't know if you knew her, she as a

beautiful movie star, she had a beautiful complexion and hair, she always kept it so nicely... and she came back and she was as dark as she could be like chocolate black, you know and her skin, poor thing and her hair was long, she had to put it very neatly, very arranged and when she came back it was all, one of the guys had a knife in his pocket and he had to cut her hair off because it got tangled in the jungle, you know, while walking through so she looked awful, I felt so badly about, they had a really bad experience.

AF: Besides that unusual experience, do you recall any another particularly unusual or perhaps humorous events?

ER: Well, let's see...not humorous I don't think... well, we had fun, I mean it was all just, you know, military stuff, we had fun, we had, we went out for rides and we went out dancing mostly, everybody was dancing and we had good music, we had, we didn't have radios or TVs of course and we had a record player with the old fashioned that dragged the wine up, that was our music.

AF: And I've seen your photographs, can you tell us about the ones you have?

ER: Which particular ones?

AF: The ones in New Guinea.

ER: Well I was going with this man who was a professional photographer and he's the one who gave most of these pictures of the atrocities in the Philippines, it was very bad, when I first arrived in the Philippines we went to Corregidor and that's, they had the platoon march, just before we went over there and there was this tunnel that we went to, I wish I, sometimes that I had never seen it because it had, it had just happened, just about a month before and they, the Japanese had the prisoners, the young American prisoners marching there around the area and so they made them stopped and they started picking the youngest ones, you know, they picked up about twelve youngest, of the younger ones that were there and they told them to step aside and then they made them go through, they told them to march through the tunnel, there was a little tunnel over there and they had sprayed it with gasoline and site and then there was one Japanese guy in either end and they lit a match when the kids were in there and they all died of course, eighteen of them and when we went to see it, we could still smell the stench and all

and I saw shoe with a foot still in it and I felt really bad, it was... the youngest ones they could find they took, you know, to and so then at the side of the tunnel there was a little mountain, a little hill, a little hillside and there were some wild gardenias growing on the hillside, which was at the contrast with the tunnel and I thought, 'Geez, this must be the souls of all these young men', you know, that perished... it was sad, that was the saddest thing. The Japanese were very, very cruel... you want me to talk about that? I learned from the Filipino women, how they treated some of the prisoners of war, they take the men and they hanged them from a tree upside down and they had, always had some starving rats that they... then they put a starving rat down the pant leg, a couple of them, that's what they did to a man when they got tired of them and then they go raping on the women and when the women were ready to give birth they tied their legs together so they couldn't give birth, so... they were cruel, real, real cruel.

AF: Did you had any contact with...?

ER: No, not personal contact. I saw them when they came to sign the surrender papers, I saw them getting off the plane, you know, to sign the papers and one time I saluted General McArthur. I was walking down the road and I staff car coming with a flag and I thought, 'Oh, God!', I was all alone and I didn't know what to do, I didn't know what to run or what, so I just stood there and just saluted and he saluted back and he smiled a little and I thought, 'What am I doing here?', so...

AF: And you have a photo of Philippine children?

ER: Oh, yes, I do have one here, they were very... you haven't seen any sadder eyes in those little children... Here, and they were barefoot and wore raggedy clothes and their hair was all messed up, the little girls, they were in tatter clothes, I didn't see any boys, I just saw the little girls, I guess they stuck together and the little boys maybe weren't that, maybe they were bashful but some of the atrocities, you know the, I have the...

AF: A hospital?

ER: This were all in the Philippines, all this destruction by the bombing that they had, almost everything, there was nothing standing up when we went over there and I... I have a picture of McArthur's headquarters, he had a mention in the

Philippines, McArthur was a very proud man, he wouldn't allow anybody there into his mansion from the rank of captain up, nobody else was allowed, that's why I didn't know if I should salute him. (risas) Well, let's see, the one thing that I had done in the Philippines that I still have is this gown that was made out of parachute, it hasn't faded, it hasn't shrunken or anything and I've washed it and it's a, I had it made out of parachute, this young man, the captain came and asked me if I wanted a parachute for a souvenir to take home and I thought, 'What am I gonna do with a parachute?', because I had no idea what to do with it and it was so heavy and balky so he said, 'Well, some of the ladies are having blouses made and you know and lingerie', and I thought maybe I could have a formal gown, so I had this made, he took me to a tailor and he measured me and made this for me with real, I mean handmade sequence of pearls as decoration and it was very nice, I enjoyed it very much... This is the hut where the tailor lived, that's where he made my gown, so I still have it but it doesn't fit of course (risas), my daughter has it. And then I had a young lady, they say everybody has a twin in this world and I found my twin, she was a little Italian girl, we had the same complexion, the same height, the same everything and somebody took us a picture there. This is my sister who's stationed in West Point, she got married there, while she was there... let's see what else. I don't know if you want to see these?, this is when we went bay walk before I went overseas, just a little training with our gas masks and our blanket, that's all we had and dehydrated food.

AF: What did you think of officers or fellow soldiers and everything of good spirit, did you ever had any hard feeling for people at you station?

ER: No, you know, I expected, when I went in... because I lived in New Mexico, I was raised among the Italian and Irish people, I attended Saint Patrick Academy and so I get along very well, you know, there was never any prejudice whatsoever never, in the service for me, in fact I was promoted four times in eighteen months and I haven't heard of anybody else that was promoted. I had good bosses and we got along beautifully, everybody, we were just very compatible.

AF: And the highest rank you got?

ER: Staff Sergeant... yeah, then I went overseas when I was Staff Sergeant and

the ratings were frozen so I didn't go any further. Well they didn't have time, we didn't have time to be promoted, we were too busy, you know, so that was it.

AF: Did you keep a personal diary?

ER: No, no.

AF: Did you stay with many of the letters that people sent to you?

ER: Yes, I have the letters.

AF: Can you talk about after service?

ER: After the service I... when we were coming on the ship as soon as somebody spotted the San Francisco harbor lights, everybody ran to that side of the ship and we thought we were gonna capsize, you know because everybody was yelling and screaming and jumping and everything it was so, such a happy feeling, you have no idea and so we were sent home right away, we stayed there and they fed us and we went home, to our families, that was nice, so nice, you know, coming home because I have been gone two years and so it was very nice.

AF: And what did you do the days and weeks afterwards?

ER: Afterwards I thought I'd go back to College and get my degree so I went, I enrolled for my senior year and I stayed there one semester and just about the end of the semester I was offered a job at the University of California at the Bancroft Library and they needed someone right away, they didn't want me to finish the semester practically and I told them, 'I've got to finish my semester', I wanted to get my degree before I went to work but they insisted that they needed somebody immediately, they wanted me to translate some of the Spanish documents from the early California history and they had nobody because they wanted, they didn't want someone who studied Spanish, they wanted someone who spoke it, because there are a lot of idiomatic expressions that have to be interpreted and so I was recruited and I went and I worked there ten years at the Bancroft Library, that was quite an experience. I never got my degree, I never got back to school but this was a better education, actually, working at the Bancroft Library.

AF: So when you came home it was because WWII had ended?

ER: Yes.

AF: And where were you when you heard WWII had ended?

ER: I was in the Philippines and they just announced it and you know to all of us... it was in the morning and we were just, we had just finished breakfast and they announced it in the dining room and so everybody was just so happy, just happy.

AF: What were your first thoughts?

ER: Well I was glad that all the guys could go home because they were the ones that needed, you know, to get home, they had suffered quite a bit, you know, all the guys, you know, they really did all the work but it was nice.

AF: Where you at other veterans' organizations before you...?

ER: I belonged to the VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars and to the Catholic War Veterans before I came here.

AF: For how long?

ER: Well, about, I don't know, quite a few years, I've been here seven years and I'm a life member of the VFW, there aren't many women at the VFW, a lot of them didn't go overseas, I don't know why, you had a choice, a lot probably didn't want to.

AF: And why did you choose to go overseas?

ER: Well, I thought, as long as they offered me the experience I would take it, I don't mind going, is just that I didn't want my mom to worry, extra worrying about me being in danger, that's why I didn't signed up but I didn't mind, I wasn't afraid, I wanted to go, you know, so I got the opportunity.

AF: Have you been back since?

ER: No.

AF: Where, what did you worked after the war?

ER: After I got out of the service, well, only at the UC, that's the only place I've worked and my husband opened a restaurant, he had a restaurant at Berkeley for thirty years, so I have five kids, they all attended school there and all of them got to get their degrees at different universities. My oldest daughter got a degree at architectural design at UC Santa Barbara and one of them went to USF, she was accepted at Stanford but her boyfriend wasn't so they had to send her to USF which was a little cheaper.

AF: Did your military experience influence your thinking about the war and military

in general?

ER: Yes, I'm always aware and this is kind of unnerving but yeah, you don't forget these things. At night when I lay down I think, I remember little things, you know.

AF: Do you support to go to war right now?

ER: Well, I don't think so, I don't know, I don't think so, I think they should settle it somehow.

AF: Overall, in your life, how did your service experience affect you?

ER: I think my life wouldn't have been complete if I hadn't been in the military, I think I would miss out one of the biggest experiences of my life because I think I can... you know, I had a different impression of youth, I want them to be protected, I hate to see them go to war, you know, and I think that the education, if they get a good education they'll all have opportunities nowadays to do well for themselves, we didn't do in the Depression, hardly anyone was able to afford going to any College and we worked for 50 cents an hour, when I was on to College and I worked my way through and it was tough but it's still tough, expensive nowadays.

AF: Is there anything you'll like to add that we have not covered about your service times during the war?

ER: Can't think of anything else, I think I've said about everything... I don't know, I've just had a wonderful life.

AF: Well, thank you so much for this interview.

ER: Thank you.

AF: We appreciate it so much.

Transcripción No. 10

Christine E. Long

Women's Army Air Force (WAAF)-Army Air Forces/Corps

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Nombre: Christine E. Long

Lugar de nacimiento: Kansas, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Nueva Jersey, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Afroamericana

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fechas de servicio: 1943-1953

Entrada al servicio: Enlistada

Rama del servicio: Women's Army Air Forces/Corps

Ubicación de servicio: Newark, Nueva Jersey; Iowa, Ohio; San Antonio, Texas; Illinois

Rango mayor: Sargento del estado mayor

Prisionera de guerra: No

Entrevistador: Carol Fowler

Colaborador: Carol Fowler

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Transcripción

Entrevistadora Carol Fowler: Ok, welcome to the Center for US War Veterans Oral Histories at the National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey in Sea Girt, in partnership with the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress. Today, September 7, 2005, I'm Carol Fowler, my honored veteran is Christine E. Long of WWII and Korea, a distinguished veteran of the Women's Army Air Force. She holds a sciences degree from Tuskegee University in Health and Physical Education. Miss Long served from 1944 until 1953 and attends the rank of Staff Sergeant. Thanks to veterans like you, Christine, we are building a collection of veterans' oral histories that stand in tribute to those that we cannot soon forget. Your eye witness account is a primary historical source that inspired all the projects here. The recording of your memories would not only help to recruit future veterans to our project but will also inspire and enlightened our museums visitors. Christine it is my privilege to welcome you here today, thank you for giving up your time to share your experiences from your military service during WWII and Korea, good afternoon and welcome.

CEL: Ok (risas)

CF: (risas) Shall I call you Chris or Christine?

CEL: Everyone calls me Chris but you can call me whatever you want.

CF: Ok. Chris before you entered the Air Force, you were a graduate from Tuskegee University, can you talk a little bit about those memories about that time?

CEL: My mother died when I was five months old...

CF: I'm sorry.

CEL: I'm not... she died when I was five months old, I was at your house this week, next month, that's how I get raised and at four years old I wanted to go to school and I finally got there mostly because I was, you had to be five, my birthday comes in March and when I got there I never looked back.

CF: And that was in Kansas?

CEL: Yeah, I kept long going to school and I ended up in an orphanage.

CF: How old were you?

CEL: When I was in the orphanage I was 11 years old, I can't say what I would like to say but I got out of the orphanage, I went to a boarding High School and worked my way through there.

CF: What kind of jobs did you do then?

CEL: Whatever, I worked in a... a young man and I worked in a laundry, we had clean sheets when no one had clean sheets (risas)

CF: That's important.

CEL: Yeah, his clothes was always stage clean, he wore kakis back on those days and we always had nice clean clothes for working in the laundry and then I got a Work Athletic Scholarship to Tuskegee, they came down the Athletic Worker came to the school to interview me and they wanted me to come to Tuskegee so I went to Tuskegee with three dollars, that was a lot of money. Three dollars. So I worked there all day and school at night. I didn't thought secondly on... I didn't have... I get it together after a while, I wasn't auditorial, I was second, 'cus I was still on much of work and I would go through like I did with other schools and my first job was working for the (no claro) for in Washington, D.C. It was a very interesting job because the children didn't want to go back home, they wanted to stay in camp, this was the camp, they wanted to stay and we had to hunt them in the bus and put them on the bus cus' they didn't want to go back, they liked in the camp there, they got good food, they had people to play with, the counselors were nice, so it was fun but they had to go back home and to give you an example, one mother (no claro) her home to somebody and they lived across the street upstairs in one bedroom, the child didn't liked that and I don't blame him and he didn't want to go back home. And that job lasted for 6 weeks session, so it was 12 weeks and I was the Athletic Director, we had swimming and everything.

CF: Is that before you joined the service?

CEL: Yeah, all this happened before (risas) I did a lot before I got into service cus' I graduated in 43 and in 44 I was in the service and I listened to the recruiting officer,

she said 'don't go and tell everybody what you did just go and GA, General Commission', and I listened to her and I got in the service and I was chosen as, PT, Physical Training and all that and I didn't have to go to supply, that's where always put you to supply or cook, like Dorie, you remember Dorie?, he was a cook

CF: Pearl Harbor?

CEL: Yeah

CF: I wanted to ask you about Pearl Harbor, what you remember about December 7th, 1941?

CEL: I remember that 1941, it was on a Sunday, December the 7th. President Roosevelt was talking and I was in College and we spent the whole Sunday walking around the campus because it was our biggest fearings, a big experience and some of us remember, with our history, you know, we remember what happened in WWI. WWI was terrible and here we were on WWII and the interesting thing about that was that December the 8th we woke up the next morning and all the men were gone, the only persons there were the four "Fs" (risas)

CF: The ones not good enough for the Army?

CEL: They didn't qualify, they made themselves not qualified or one or the other. General Benjamin Oliver Davis was junior, was our ROTC Officer, he was my best friend.

CF: Wow!

CEL: I have pictures of him, I brought them with me and that but he was my best friend and when he walked up to escort the young ladies to chapel everybody got excited, all the girls were excited, he made (unclear), he was that straight, of course you know he was mistreated in West Point, they didn't speak to him for two years, all that garbage because he was colored (risas)

CF: He broke the color barrier at West Point?

CEL: Yeah, he sort of broke the color barrier, you might say that... and when they said that they wanted him for the Air Force, this General said 'no'.

CF: So after West Point, General Davies just went to Tuskegee?, he went into College and you were in the ROTC.

CEL: He was our ROTC Officer. When I was in the High School I had to, I went up to First Lieutenant cus' we had a marching group and I was a ahead up, started as a second lieutenant went up to first lieutenant and we marched all everywhere and I was in the band.

CF: What did you played?

CEL: Clarinet and I played the Saxophone, they said that was too hard for women and they were a lie. Women can play anything they wanna play and when I got to Tuskegee, the 99 squadron, that's what they called then. I remember one day I was coming out of the (no claro) and they had this gentleman trying to march with these fellows, he sounded like a little old lady, he says 'I think you turned yourself (no claro) and I come out and sat up, all straighten up and he said (unclear) march toward me and I said 'oh, boy, I got me into trouble', but I wasn't, because he said, they didn't teach him how to do what I was doing and he got in with the group and he learned from them and we used to have the... were the men would come over, there was a big area and we will come over and I would march, they couldn't understand how I stood in one spot and could march like that and I didn't have to, march like they did but I just called the (no claro) and they would march but then I learned that a long time ago, how to do that, and then some... I don't know how many are still living or that, there were some that were still living but I don't know, General Davis died of (no claro) that was a long time ago, didn't know his father but BEOS as we called him, was fantastic, he was in charge of four docks and then he was (no claro) air force base, when I got transferred there, he was my commanding officer.

CF: Where was that?

CEL: Lockbourne Air Force Base in Columbus, Ohio

CF: What about... isn't it his son also famous?

CEL: Who?

CF: General Davis' son?, was he a Vietnam veteran?, did you know?

CEL: He was, no not a Vietnam veteran, he was a 99 squadron and he led that group, General... you kinda threw me there... the Davis I was talking about went to West Point, his father, I don't know if he got to West Point, I guess he did, he might

have... but anyway, we know about BO Davis Jr., that's what I'm talking about.

CF: How many stars did he had as a general?

CEL: Four

CF: Four star general

CEL: Yeah and I think they gave that to him after the fact that they learned that he had all timers, cus' that's what they used to do, cus' I have a lot of friends that had problems and they got promoted after the fact... I was trying to think about another person that I knew that got promoted after the fact, he got... he only got to Colonel

CF: Do you have any other personal recollections of your interactions with General Davis?

CEL: Yeah, we was, he was just our commanding officer and every time we saw each other... he was tall (risas) and I liked him because he was tall, cu's I was tall but he was fantastic, that's all I can say and they broke up the camp and became a strategic Air Command and then I lost track cu's I went to Amarillo, Texas, of all the places

CF: How tall were you, Chris?

CEL: 5'8 before I got 85, I shrunk

CF: So did you had new of the progress of the war considering that you didn't joined until 44?

CEL: It all started in 41 and I joined in 44, I graduated in 43

CF: And in between there, you joined that camp in D.C. with the kids in the summer?

CEL: I... that's when I graduated from, that was my first job when I graduated. My first job was that camp for delinquent children which was interesting because I was interested in delinquent children and I have always been and I fight for them all the time, some of my best friends were, children that had handicaps like that and I see them right now and they say the same, they point to me and this long I remember you and they tell me they love me, if I go to shop and there's one in there, they work in the foods town store, or certain day they worked there. One of them that I know has better car than I would ever have (risas) I thought it was, what was his name?, well, he had one of those cars parked on the handicap spot and he come

up with the same thing, the thing cus' I was his favorite, that's what he said And I had worked with him since he was a little fellow.

CF: You made a difference for a lot of lives, I think you.

CEL: Yeah... everyday, people ask me, 'do you get...' cu's I live by myself, there's nobody from my family with me and I got out of the door and somebody would say 'good morning, Mrs Long' and I'm fine... I live, where I live now this gentleman has hair that would make snuggle, because his hair is that white and he graduated in 1970, he says 'I remember you, Mrs. Long because you were my gym teacher' (risas) but, and then I got into another apartment 30, she and her daughter live there and my neighbor downstairs next door to me, he's the Dean of the University, next door on this side is learning to be a doctor (risas)

CF: That's exciting

CEL: Yeah, but I have lot of students, when I go to the hospital, they're all there and this last time I was in the hospital, well, I must thought that was crap because I was going home but she, you know...

CF: She got used to seeing you

CEL: Yeah, she liked to take care of me or something and then others were there nursing their parents and they come by to see me as much as they did their parents.

CF: That's really special

CEL: One young lady, she was Caucasian, she had, what was... uncle, not uncle, something, cousin in there and he took care of her when she was little and now he's a serious diabetic and she's taking care of him, he's married but she says 'Mrs Long she married for his money', he gave her thousands of dollars to marry him but anyway, she used to come by and comb my hair and brush it, she bring me fresh water, a bottle, very nice and they would all learn that I was in the hospital and come running and my church is the same way, they miss me and they call up to find out where I am. One lady she turned 93, Sunday, two weeks ago, and his son is, I swear he's seven foot, he swears he isn't, he's already retired from teaching.

CF: Chris, I need to ask you about, after you worked in that camp in D.C., where

did you worked after that or did you into the Army Air Force then?

CEL: I got a call from the (no claro) College and I didn't get the job, I think because I was catholic, I can't swear to it but I had to put my religious preference and I never got the job and I think that's the reason why I never got the job so after that...

CF: That's in the South?

CEL: Yeah, that's way in the South.

CF: And they are anti-Catholic down there?

CEL: Well, her College.... She was a beautiful woman but, she called them the second Mrs. Roosevelt but I can't swear to that, somebody said that so, that I was a catholic. So after that I got a job in (no claro) Park making two hundred dollars a month.

CF: A High School?

CEL: No, a gentleman came from Chicago, who was to be my boss, he got three hundred, was supposed to get three hundred, we got there was a political thing, they cut him down to a hundred and fifty and me to a hundred. I got a job, making uniforms for men in the service and I worked there until I decided I was going in the service.

CF: But what about your College degree?, didn't you apply for teaching jobs?

CEL: Yeah

CF: So what happened?

CEL: Should I tell her?, you awake?... 'I'm sorry but we don't hire colored', that was what you heard all the time, even when I come and worked, I heard that after I got out of the service, they were still saying that they would not hire, that they haven't hired colored before but they would hire me if I worked in the great school

CF: And you were preferring to work in the College, not in any other school?

CEL: No no no, they were just saying that, they didn't want to hire us. You have to know the history to know what I'm talking about, they didn't want to hire us. When I was in the service, for example, I was stationed in Nebraska, there was a young man who was top notch attorney in Chicago, he was only a PFC in the service, they didn't give him any rank and we set up a school, he was a teacher in the

school, the other young men who they thought he was a tyga, he wasn't a tyga, he was jewish, they didn't liked them too either because of his hair, they thought he was a tyga, he wasn't, he was jewish and there was a couple of others and myself that set up a school teaching the WWI veterans to read and write and all of that...

CF: Where was that?

CEL: In Lincoln, Nebraska and the General got his High School diploma and he had announced on the radio, we hadn't television, on the radio for all week, he was so proud he got his High School diploma and we had taught him and then he got transferred and lost track of him, I guess they ship him somewhere else and the jewish fellow, the attorney, I happen... that outfit I had, this, I made those slacks, I went down to that jewish center and bought the material and I went to find out that was the jewish gentleman that we had helping us teach, and they called that the zoot suit and I made those slacks, we were allowed to wear those off duty, that's when we could wear those uniforms but I... met his parents and they told me the story of how their son was treated and they were nice people to me, I didn't care that they were jewish, indian or anything but that's the way things were on those days.

CF: So you enlisted in the Air Force in 44

CEL: Yeah, in 44

CF: And where exactly was that?

CEL: I was in (no claro) Park and I had to go to Newark

CF: Where in Newark did you go?

CEL: I don't know, I had to report for duty at this, whatever it was, I didn't think they were gonna call me, they were so slow doing it.

CF: So you enlisted in the Army or the Army Air Force?

CEL: Army Air Corps, they called it

CF: Ok, and how did you come up to pick that branch?

CEL: I liked, well... Tuskegee, the Air Force

CF: Do you keep in touch with any Tuskegee airman you went to school with?

CEL: I was stationed with them.

CF: And did you write to them when they were overseas?

CEL: No, I didn't have to, they were Lockbourne Air Force base, they were there with Benjamin O. Davis Jr.

CF: In Columbus, Ohio?

CEL: Right, they came from Fort Nox and they were transferred to Columbus, Ohio and I came from, I was in Texas.

CF: Amarillo?

CEL: No, I wasn't there yet (risas)

CF: Let's go where you were in Newark, where did they sent you from Newark?

CEL: Des Moines, Iowa

CF: And that was your boot camp?

CEL: Yeah

CF: Was that an adjustment for you?

CEL: No

CF: Because you had been in ROTC from High School, you were used to the regiments?, discipline?, waking up early?

CEL: No, I had no problem, I had fun and as a matter of a fact, when our drill sergeant was out there trying to drill them, and didn't know what she was doing, I come along with my up, two, three, four doing.

CF: Do you have any memories from those days training that stand up for you?, just a lot of marching?

CEL: We marched and I coached basketball, they gave me elderly people that they thought I couldn't coach and they fooled them, I won't make another statement, but they fooled them, they played, when they had to bounce the ball twice before they shoot and they, these elderly people remember from when they were way back then, when they were taught us how to do things, taught us history, kids don't have geography and history now like they used to have and they did alright, we won the championship.

CF: Congratulations. Why did you had elderly people at your boot camp?

CEL: Up to 38 was the age, up to 38, men and women.

CF: So you say elderly, you mean mid-thirties?, around there?

CEL: Yeah, they called them elderly

CF: That's ok

CEL: I was 23 at the time, as a matter of a fact when I came to (no claro) Park I was 23, the young man that I thought I was gonna marry was, he was 23.

CF: Was he from College?

CEL: Yeah

CF: He died somewhere in Japan, the japs got him

CF: Oh, sorry

CEL: There was another gentleman...

CF: So you were engaged and he was killed?

CEL: Well... we were gonna get married, we put it that way

CF: Did you got letter from him over there?

CEL: Oh, yeah, I got V-letters, you know what the V-letters are?

CF: The V-mail, yeah. You didn't bring those with you?

CEL: No, cus' it's falling apart (risas)

CF: So what kind of things did he write to you?

CEL: That was personal (risas), as a matter of a fact I hadn't told any other person too, V-letters

CF: What was his job over there?

CEL: He was in the Coast Guard and I would've gone into Coast Guard but they didn't take women of color, they didn't take us in the navy then.

CF: Right, the Navy was the last branch that took women, right?

CEL: I don't know if it was the last branch, I know that they didn't take us

CF: Right... Ok, after Des Moines, Iowa where did you after that?, did you go for special training?

CEL: I went to Lincoln, Nebraska, yeah, I think I went to Lincoln, no I didn't go to Lincoln.

CF: And what was there?

CEL: No, I didn't go to Lincoln... yeah, I went to Lincoln, it was the Air Force.

CF: An Air Force base in Lincoln?

CEL: Yeah... on may day... when the war ended in Europe, the PFC drove his Jeep right straight to service club and he didn't got court martial, cus' the war was

over, we thought the war was over and then we had to go to Japan when McArthur and that long march, those men who marched and dropped dead...

CF: Batan death march?

CEL: Yeah and that was terrible but I will never forget him driving to the service club, they had, you know, they had the service club for the enlisted men and the service club officers. Our commanding officer couldn't go to the officers club because she, and she was whiter than you, she was classified as colored and then we, we all got behind it, so they didn't allowed her to go, she could only go on days when nobody else was there and then the officers that got stupid, so they broke it down and let her go to the officers club in the time she wanted to but we had the same problem with the service club and they used to allow us to bring our booze home, to the barracks, we could get out bottle and bring it to the barracks but we couldn't drink it in the club.

CF: That was in Nebraska?

CEL: Yeah, that was in Nebraska

CF: How did that affect your unit that your officer was not allowed in the club?

CEL: We fought for, we root... they had female in charge of the women in the service and there's always somebody there, a young lady who looked like Anne Blythe, remember her?, movie star?, you're a youngster (risas), she looked like Anne Blythe and she helped fight get us going. I remember they wanted to send me to Fort Clairbourne, I was a jump out school, this officer that we had, he didn't understand how I could teach, you know like, I would have this program for the men, flight men and we would have touch football and whatever and nobody showed up to referee, I would referee and he didn't understand that cus' he got three dollars, that was big deal, I didn't care about the three dollars but the fellows enjoyed it, as a matter of a fact, they came out in the snow one day and finished out the tournament in their class uniform, cus' this fellow was supposed to help me out, he didn't know what he was doing, so they helped us out, they were very nice and then when I told him to come to the athletic department and get the rewards and when they walked in and saw all these trophies lying on the counter, they didn't think they were for them. Colonel Bill story, he was the colonel of the

Cardinals...

CF: St. Louis?

CEL: St. Louis Cardinals and he was in charge of the men, the flight, they were learning to be, the flight, they were gonna go to flight school and when they saw all those trophies lined up there they were all like 'those aren't for us' and they were so surprised, they went, they were in class uniform they set up in the bleachers like he told them to and then I called up some of them to help me give out the trophies and they were ecstatic that they got these trophies cus' they won, and especially those who were out in the snow and helped. It was fun. I enjoyed... I enjoyed teaching, period.

CF: Where those troops segregated at the time?

CEL: Yeah.

CF: We didn't really talked about that very much, before president Truman declared the military to be integrated, when was that?, 45?

CEL: That was... 45... it wasn't Truman, it was Eisenhower was the one that sat down and had meals and broke up the segregation, he was the first one. Truman did a lot after the fact but Eisenhower did more.

CF: So you served during all those years of change

CEL: Yeah

CF: So can you tell us, can you take us thought it, those of us who weren't there at the time, can you take us through the changes that you saw?

CEL: Where do I start?

CF: Well, we were just in Nebraska, so you talked about there were segregated...

CEL: From Nebraska we went to Texas and we were in Texas, I'm not sure...

CF: And what was your specialty in the Air Force, what was, did you got special training for any certain job or coaching?

CEL: I just told you.

CF: Teaching and coaching?

CEL: I was... I got everybody up bed every morning and gave my exercises, females and then when we got to mixture, when they got unsegregated, the men too

CF: How were the living quarters like?

CEL: The barracks?, they were pretty good, you still had to live in the barracks and I looked at one picture yesterday, I said 'Geez, I remember her, she had smelly feet' (risas), she slept on top

CF: Were all the women single?

CEL: Yeah, you had to be then, if you got married you got out of the service.

CF: What about your officers?

CEL: They were single, my CO got married, after they broke the thing down, she got married and she had to keep her husband sorta hidden because he was Staff Sergeant...

CF: She outranked him

CEL: She outranked him and I remember we had a marriage because he was going overseas and was done in the auditorium and all of us had to be there to see it, they got married and then they went, I think a week of honeymoon, something like that and then he went overseas, I don't know what happened after that.

CF: Would you say that the demand for the Air Force exceeded the number of women available to serve in the Air Force, by the time you joined?, women replaced the men to be freed up for combat duties and other.

CEL: I didn't notice

CF: I read that the Army nurses were signed to the Air Force and they didn't have to endure the ridicule that some women did that pioneered occupations that prior to WW2 were all men occupations.

CEL: Yeah

CF: Like airplane mechanics and all that

CEL: I've got an article here... (leyendo) July 2000, the total veterans, total veteran population in the United States and Puerto Rico was estimated to be 24,000 to 298,518, the female population estimation is 1.2 million. States with the largest number of female veterans is California, Florida, Texas, New York. In New Jersey we had 27,313 residents that were female veterans. This was from Burton County Newsletter, you got it?

(Salto al 45.44)

CF: We were talking about the changes that you saw in the military from WW2 through Korea, the changes that you saw after the troops were integrated, after you left Nebraska you went to Texas...

CEL: It was very interesting when we were shipped to Texas because, we were shipped there from Nebraska?, somewhere up there, of the Air Force base we were shipped to Texas it was a very interesting (no claro) they had up there (...) San Antonio, that's where I was, strange weather they got down there, it changes like men but anyway, when we were there they thought it was gonna be a big problem because we were black, as they said, we were colored, so they said and they had a white unit there and our commanding officer, he told us they didn't had any jobs. Our commanding officer went with all those generals and colonels and said 'do you need a secretary?, do you need this, do you need that?, I have them, do you mind that they are, as you say, colored?', and the general, the colonels, whatever they were, they said, 'I don't care who they are as long as they could do the work'. And all of us got jobs and she went back and told us 'My girls are all hired', and then we found out that the whit unit of WACs, they had to walk to work, that was the only way they could get there, I learned to drive the bus, one those big buses?, and I used to pick them up and when they were in, we were all friends and I remember I was picking up people as I come along that were walking and nobody told me how to double clutch, you had to double clutch in order to shift gears and there was a second lieutenant there and he said, 'this lady has not been taught how to drive this bus and I'm gonna teach you and you are gonna sit there and listen' (risas) and he taught me how to double clutch and drive that bus and I thanked him and he said 'any other help you need let me know', he must have been some kind of real soldier but I drove everybody to work

CF: So the Women Army Cor... Women...?

CEL: Women Air Force, they changed...

CF: The WACs?

CEL: They changed it in 49 to Women's Air Force, first it was Women's Army Air Force and then they changed it to the Women's Air Force, WAF

CF: But in San Antonio you were with the, another unit, you said they were white

women?

CEL: Yeah.

CF: And then they had to march everywhere, they didn't get...

CEL: No, they had to walk everywhere

CF: Ah, ok.

CEL: Those that had jobs, they had to walk

CF: And Texas is some wide open spaces, right?, that must have been quite a distance

CEL: Long ways and we had, I had my program for athletic sports and everything and I remember that this one lieutenant or whatever he was, he said 'I wish I could get all these fellows to take exercises like you get your girls to do, they don't want to do it', I said, 'Well, my girls have to do the exercises before they play, cuz they get hurt', he says, 'I know'. And he, eventually he got them to do some exercises before they were participating in sports because you know, you're out there, right now, if you are not in condition...

CF: You need to stretch

CEL: You need to do...

CF: Warm up?

CEL: Warm up, everything and even after you do it you have to be careful because you might get cold or something... and I developed a lot of friends like that and I played softball, I played any position in softball, I coached them played. We went to Chicago and that's probably why I can't find that hat, cuz' it got soaked wet and it dripped down on my eye and you couldn't, you couldn't do this to change the hat, you had to keep your arms going, we marched all over Chicago, it was a special march and it poured and when we got back to our... I had this outfit that you got over there and I was the only one that got something to change into and everybody else had to wait for the clothes to dry, I had that to put on.

CF: Your zoot suit?

CEL: Yeah, I had that to put on and they were jealous, 'How come you had that', I said, 'Well, I brought it, put it the bag and brought it'

CF: You were prepared

CEL: Yeah

CF: That's one of the things the Army thought you, right?, respect, duty, loyalty, honor, integrity and personal courage?

CEL: I learned that before I got in the service, I learned that somewhere back there most of it and then when I got to Tuskegee, we had like Booker T. Washington said, 'You learn to do by doing', and that's what we did, we learned to do by doing.

CF: On the job chain?

CEL: Yeah

CF: What kind of discrimination did you see against women in general?, you kinda mentioned that they were not really provided with vehicles, other things like that that you saw?

CEL: Yeah, well, a lot of men had the wrong idea, they thought... we put them straight, we straight them up real fast. They thought, first they thought that women were in the service to satisfy the officers, then they thought that women were in the service to satisfy them, wouldn't look at them anyhow, cu's they were (no claro) excuse my French (risas) The Caucasian men showed up in our day room and asked us to go out to the show and they would play pool, our men showed up looking like, as I said, they weren't dressed, they were greasy from the motor pool were they had work and they couldn't understand why we couldn't go out with them, so we told them, I said, 'These young men come here, they are dressed to the nights and ask us to go out to all the women on the field and ask us to go out to the movies and we accepted and when you got to the point when you could do that, then we will go out with you'. So that's how we woke them up.

CF: So the movie would be up there on the base?

CEL: Oh, yeah, we had all the movies

CF: You didn't go out into town?

CEL: No, it was too far anyhow, some places we would go, you know, if you had the money to ride, 25 cents, to ride the bus into town

CF: And how did you find the Texans to be?, in the town?

CEL: Just like all the others. Mobile, Alabama and anywhere else, you know, you go back in history. Ella Fitzgerald, she was supposed to perform at Auburn, College

or some College down there and they said that if she came to Tuskegee first they didn't want her to come, they wanted her to perform there first before she... that's where they were, you know, so that's part of the segregation. I recall another incident which is not very happy. This woman was having an affair with this gentleman, black gentlemen and her husband came home all of a sudden and she shooed him at the back door and when the husband ask her why she looked like that she said she was raped and she pointed to the first black she saw walking down the street and they grabbed her, grabbed it per se and stringed it up to a tree and killed it and then they said, 'Let's pull the clothes off' and when they pulled the clothes off they found out it was a woman, the woman cleaned the toilets on the trains and they all walked away like rats. It was on the newspaper.

CF: Where was that?

CEL: In Alabama, way back there but that's how they used to do things, a lot of things were like that.

CF: So what were you told when you were into service about going into town?, were you warned about anything?

CEL: Oh, we do. See, I come from Kansas. Kansas was just as segregated as Alabama, Texas, Georgia, you name it... speaking of hurricanes, we used to have (no claro) to see how the hurricane did or the tornado in Kansas and one day I wanted an ice cream cone so people I was in the home with gave me some money so I could get an ice cream cone, they told me I had to go to the back door, so I went to the back door. 'What kind of ice cream do you want?', I said, 'A vanilla ice cream cone, double dip', took him forever to get me this ice cream cone, when they brought it, it was in a brown paper bag turned upside down and it was chocolate, they didn't serve us white ice cream.

CF: I think I've heard that before.

CEL: Yeah, if you wanted butter, they gave you lard, they didn't serve us butter, we finally learned to make our own butter, you know, but it was very interesting.

CF: How did you cope with that?

CEL: I took everything is stride because somewhere along the line I told somebody just recently, we were talking about the Virgin mother Mary, I said somehow

another, when she came along she held everything inside and then when she got to the point where she could understand the things, when she knew what her son was doing, I said I didn't know about that back then, I wasn't catholic then, I'm a convert but I did the same thing, I held everything in until I was old enough to figure out what was all about.

CF: You raised yourself

CEL: Right. When I was, ten years old, eleven, twelve, I had a dream and my dream was that I was a teacher and it was four o'clock in the afternoon and I didn't had a friend in the world. When I was a teacher, I had lots of friends (risas)

CF: You already talked about that actually.

CEL: And I had lots of friends and when I taught in school all of the kids were my friends.

CF: How old were you when you converted to Catholicism?

CEL: 24

CF: You were in the service then?

CEL: No, I was going in the service, just before I went in the service, cu's I had to prove that I was born, they didn't had birth certificates when I came along and they didn't make one birth certificate for me, I had a strange family, my grandparents didn't (no claro) to my father because he would've been a house boy, you know what that is?, he was a... let's say he wasn't right (risas), he had a nappy head.

Transcripción no. 11

June E. Betz

SPARS (Guardia Costera)

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.10397/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Sin especificar

Duración: Sin especificar

Nombre: June E. Betz

Lugar de nacimiento: Toledo, Ohio, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Toledo, Ohio, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Sin especificar

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fecha de servicio: 1943-1946

Entrada en el servicio: Enlistada

Rama de servicio: SPARS (Women's Coast Guard Reserve)

Unidad de Servicio: 3ra. Oficina de Personal de Distrito

Ubicación de servicio: Palm Beach, Florida y Nueva York, Nueva York

Rango mayor: Yeoman (soldado) de primera clase

Prisionera de guerra: No

Entrevistador: Daniel Ciskey

Colaboradora: Erin McCarthy

Transcriptor: Lorilee Fink

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: Columbia College Chicago/National Court Reporters

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June E. Betz Collection

Transcripción

Entrevistador Daniel Ciskey: Okay. I'm Dan Ciskey, and I'm here interviewing -- I guess you should say that.

June E. Betz: June E. Betz.

D.C: Okay. I'm going to call you Aunt June, since you're my great aunt. And where were you born, Aunt June?

J.E.B: Toledo, Ohio, Toledo, Lucas County, Ohio.

D. C: Okay. And when were you born?

J.E.B: November 28th, 1921, around 4 o'clock in the morning.

D.C: Okay. So what kind of child were you? What kind of youth -- what was your youth like?

J.E.B: Well, we moved quite a bit. My mother was from Sandusky, Ohio. And I guess shortly after I was born, my father quit a job -- a very good job in Toledo and moved back to Erie County, where we lived on a chicken farm, I understand. I don't remember much about that, but I have a picture. I was just beginning to walk, I guess, when we moved there.

D.C: Okay. So what kind of child were you?

J.E.B: Oh, I was a real good child, didn't give anybody any trouble (risas). Just average, I guess.

D.C: So what were your parents like?

J.E.B: They were good parents; hard working. And during the Depression, my father -- we lived on a small farm, then, out in Perkins Township where later a plant was built that eventually became part of NASA. They had a wind tunnel there. But anyhow, during the Depression, my father took care of the farm and worked for WPA, that was Work Progress Administration, something that Roosevelt, I guess, established so that people would have some work and wouldn't just loaf; it made them feel better that they could go out. And a lot of things were different -- things were done by the WPA. I later found out a lot of records were recorded at that time. I'm not just sure what they were, but some of them were involved with genealogy. I later found that out when I worked with my oldest niece researching the Betz family history.

D.C: Okay. So what kind of -- excuse me. So what high school did you go to?

J.E.B: I went to the Sandusky Senior High School in the City of Sandusky, and we were transported there by bus because we lived quite a ways from the high school.

D.C: And what year did you graduate?

J.E.B: I graduated in 1939.

D.C: What did you do after high school?

J.E.B: Immediately -- well, even before I graduated, I was hired by the Merchant's Retail Credit Bureau. And there I did some work at the courthouse researching some record in regard to land that had been purchased by people and various other things in the recorder's office. And I answered the telephone; people would call in and want credit reports because they were going to -- they had been approached -- they were merchants and mortgage lenders, and they wanted a credit report. So I prepared some credit reports from the record that we had and answered the telephone part of the day, too.

D.C: So, you didn't attend college or anything like that after high school?

J.E.B: No.

D.C: Okay. So does our family have like a military history to it or many of our family members in the military?

J.E.B: I had an uncle, my father's younger brother who was in the navy during World War II. And later his son was -- that was World War I, yeah, because his son was in World War II. And he was in the air force and was shot down over Yugoslavia. And at that time, the people of Yugoslavia were helping American soldiers get to a safe place where they could get back in the military. So I wondered, in recent years when Yugoslavia went communist and then they had another war and my cousin had died in 1997, so he wasn't aware of that, but I often thought how he would feel about it because the Yugoslavian people during World War II were very helpful to our military.

D.C: So you didn't come into a lot of contact with the military, like, during your childhood?

J.E.B: No.

D.C: Was it ever -- was it ever something you thought about joining?

J.E.B: No.

D.C: Okay. So, I think we'll start talking about, like, the war and things now. So how did

you hear about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

J.E.B: Well, oh, we were listening to our local radio station and it happened that they -- it was the first day they were on the air. Because later after I returned from service they had a program on an anniversary and they invited military people to come and talk and answer questions there, and I was one of them that was chosen. And that's what they asked me, too. But we were at home that day listening to the radio when the news came and an aunt and uncle and a cousin came later in the day. They often do that on Sunday to visit.

D.C: Okay.

J.E.B: And then the summer of '43 -- of 1943, I went to Cleveland with this cousin and some of her friends to witness on the Fourth of July, a festival, and a lot of military people participated. And I saw the SPARS marching in their white uniforms, and they looked really nice and I thought -- I think I'm interested in that. So, in September I went to the recruiting office in Cleveland to get more information and before I went home I was sworn in (risas). And then I reported for duty later in September.

D.C: Okay. I want to back track just a little. So had people in the United States thought a lot about entering the war before Pearl Harbor? Did they think it was a possibility?

J.E.B: No, but I heard in recent years that Roosevelt was waiting for a really good reason to join the British in the fight in Europe, but he -- I'm not just sure. I've heard and read different things about it. But anyhow, before that, I think he realized that the people weren't ready for a war. But after that happened, people really got together and were behind them. And many young men joined the service, some when they were still in school, and then many more after they graduated.

D.C: So where did you go to train?

J.E.B: Palm Beach, Florida was my boot camp, and also I got yeoman training -- that's like secretarial work.

D.C: All right. So -- and how did you travel in those days?

J.E.B: By train.

D.C: By train?

J.E.B: That was my first experience. We went through, I think, some tunnels in Tennessee. And that was sort of different because you couldn't see -- there were no windows and you couldn't see [no claro] you got through that. Because I was in Florida

in December, I was doing my Christmas shopping. And that was a little strange to be Christmas shopping and no snow (risas), but then just before Christmas I finished my yeoman training and was given a leave to go home for Christmas.

D.C: Okay. So and after that, then, where did you go to serve?

J.E.B: I was sent -- assigned to New York City. My first day in New York City was New Year's Eve. And I met my roommate and she said, we're going to Times Square tonight to celebrate. And I had seen Times Square -- no, we didn't have television yet -- I had heard about Times Square on the radio, so I knew that it was something that somebody from a small town really shouldn't go there. But she was from New York City and she was a big tall person, so she talked me into going. And I'm glad I did, because I was actually in Times Square when the bell rang on New Year's Eve.

D.C: That's pretty cool. So what were your duties like in New York?

J.E.B: Well, I was assigned to the personnel department and I was the assistant to the chief. We had a chief who was in charge of the personnel department and there were men and women working there. And I did typing and prepared -- kept the record of the personnel in that building. And it was the Third District Coast Guard office at 42 Broadway, which was very near where later the Twin Towers were built. It was near Wall Street.

D.C: All right. So the women you trained with, were most of them assigned to the same place as you are or did they --

J.E.B: No, they were assigned wherever they were needed all over the country. And some went -- could go to Hawaii or Alaska. I would have liked to have gone to Hawaii, but my father had heart problems at the time, and I didn't want to go out of the country. But one of my friends went to Hawaii. And another one with whom I still keep in contact, went to Alaska and she met her future husband there because he was also in the Coast Guard.

D.C: So, an average day for you was kind of -- I guess you already explained that.

J.E.B: Well, just going to the office. Our barracks were -- had been a hotel on West 70th Street and Broadway, very near Central Park. And we took the subway every day to work, and that was an experience, too. Sometimes the subways were really crowded and you had to stand and hold on to a strap, and that was sort of a -- not rough ride, but you were swaying back and forth and bumping into people, but other times it wasn't so

crowded and you were able to find a seat.

D.C: So what did you do in your leisure time?

J.E.B: Well, there was plenty to do. One thing, one of my friends and I liked to do was walk up Broadway and window shop. And the two of us alone could go wherever we wanted. We had no fear of anything. It's not like New York City is now. I haven't been back, and I haven't had any great desire to go back. And we had activities, we went to Central Park. And there was always -- at least six going to different things. And we could go to a place that the U.S.O. had that we could get free tickets to a lot of things. One time I went to see a matinee of Oklahoma, and that was about the highlight of that. And then I saw Judy Garland when she was first starting out at the Palace theater one time. And I also saw Frank Sinatra in his early days. And I had no idea that he was going to rise to such stardom and be popular for so many years. And he was just a skinny little kid at the time (risas).

D.C: All right. So did you make a lot of friends, then, with the girls you served with?

J.E.B: Oh, yes. And for a long time I kept in touch with many of them, but then eventually, why, I guess they had families and didn't have time to write letters.

D.C: Did they encourage you to, like -- I'm sorry, go ahead.

J.E.B: And then later my cousin, who was too young to join when I did, joined and she worked at the Discharge Center at Brooklyn. And believe it or not, eventually we became roommates. She was able to come to where I lived, and so we were roommates. And if we had been -- if she had been old enough to join when I did, we probably would have never seen each other again, but because we enlisted at different times. And my cousin met her husband at the Discharge Center, too. He was from Long Island. And later they married in her hometown of Huron.

D.C: We read a history in class about -- from a nurse, and she said that they were encouraged to meet, like, meet a lot of boys. Did they encourage you to go out?

J.E.B: No, but usually once a month we got together and somebody would have been promoted, so we'd celebrate that promotion. And one time I drank a little bit too much beer with a shot of whiskey. But I'm not going to tell what happened after that (risas). But it was just -- we were sort of chug-a-lugging. That's not a good thing to do, especially with a little whiskey thrown in. But I only had one shot of whiskey (risas). Maybe I shouldn't be putting that down.

D.C: That's all right.

J.E.B: But we always got together on the weekend. And one time we went to someplace on Long Island, I think it was where the Coast Guard had a place where the men went and we went for a weekend. And we had steaks that were like small roasts of beef. They really ate well (risas). Otherwise, our food was okay, but I just especially remember that. And then there were a lot of places to go eat. There was one restaurant that we liked called Ship Ahoy. It was like -- I think around Columbia Circle. I think that's what it -- and it was like a ship. And they had real good ham steaks there that were nice and thick. I remember that. And then near where we worked, every Tuesday we would go to this one restaurant because they had stuffed peppers that were very good. And while we were there waiting for our meal to come, the bakery delivered long rolls of hard crusted French bread, which was very good.

D.C: So, since you were in New York City, you probably interacted a lot with, like, civilians. How did they -- I mean how did they react to you?

J.E.B: Well, actually, we didn't have -- only at church. And different churches invited service people to come for service and then stay for a meal afterward. And one time I wanted to go to Riverside, which was quite a distance from where I was, and that day I went alone. I couldn't talk anybody else into going with me. And I got off the subway and went up and it was real deserted. And a cab came by and said, lady, where did you want to go? And I told him Riverside Church. And he said, well, you're in Harlem. You get in the cab, and I'll take you over to where you wanted to go. I had gone the wrong direction as far as east and west. I had gone north, and that was okay, but I got off the wrong subway exit. But it was very quiet. There wasn't anybody on the street at that time of day on Sunday morning. So, thankfully, that cab driver knew that I didn't want to be where I was. Perhaps nothing would have happened, but I would have missed church, too.

D.C: So, what kind of contact did you have with your family while you were in New York?

J.E.B: My mother wrote to me every single day (risas). And one time I was on a radio program called 64 Dollars. Well, the highest prize was 64 dollars, and it was right before Father's Day, and I was chosen to be a participant. And my question were, who was the father and who was the son, and then they named some favorite fathers and sons. And if I wasn't getting them right away, the master of ceremonies would sort of emphasize the right answer. So I wound up getting the 64 dollars, and also, he gave me a pen and

pencil set to give to my father. And my brother happened to be listening to that radio program that night, so my parents were listening, too, of course. And they called me later to tell me that they had heard it (risas) So, that was one of the highlights. I can't think of the host of that program, but it was a program that was quite popular; ran for a long time. And then in later years I [no claro] 64,000 dollar question. And after 25 years in the local paper, it said what it happened 25 years ago, and there was a little article about me having been on that radio program (risas).

D.C: So, how often did you write home, then?

J.E.B: Well, whenever I had really good -- some really good news to write about; every week or so. Then later after my younger brother was in the service, my mother wrote to him every day, too.

D.C: So what did you miss about home, your family?

J.E.B: Well, they kept us so busy, especially during boot camp. There were six of us in a room and we had double bunks. I usually got the upper bunk for some reason (risas). But everybody was in the same boat, so you got along. I mean, thinking back now, I don't know how I ever lived with six -- with five other women. And one weekend I had KP duty and I had to prepare bushels of onions and after a few pounds, I teared so much, that I stopped tearing.

D.C: So, did you receive any promotions during the war?

J.E.B: Oh, yes. I started out as an apprentice seaman and ended up yeoman first class, which is next to chief.

D.C: How did those come about?

J.E.B: Well, I had to take courses and then my work -- work a certain period of time in each level.

D.C: Okay.

J.E.B: And I had to pass -- pass tests, too.

D.C: So, what was it like -- how -- what would you describe your leadership as? Like, do you think they were pretty competent with what they did?

J.E.B: Well, I never had anybody working under me, I just worked with people. I had a recommendation from my chief one time that said I was very competent at what I did. And at one time I had some temporary duty with the navy. At that time we didn't have Xerox machines but we had mimeograph machines. And a young man was sent with me

to do the mimeograph work, and some of the lieutenants with whom I worked weren't to -- I don't know, I worked with them okay, but they didn't seem to want me around. But the day that I had finished my temporary duty there, the captain came to my desk and thanked me. And that made up for all of the others, because that was pretty big to have a captain come and compliment to your service there.

D.C: So, when you were at home, did rationing have a big impact on, like, the things you could eat and things like that?

J.E.B: Well, military people were given extra rations when they went home, so my mother had a special meat market where she liked to get food -- or get her meat, and she always let them know when I was coming home so he'd have some special meat that she could get with the rations, theirs and mine. And then I would give her rations for gas, too, while I was home. And also, I always went to the PX to buy some cigarettes before I went home; some Camels. I didn't smoke, but my father liked to smoke, and so I'd bring a couple of cartons. I was allowed to do it because we were allowed to have a certain quota, and he was always happy with that. But I think I should not have done it because in later years he had heart problems and he smoked Camels a lot. I never smoked because he asked me not to smoke until I was 21, and by that time, I had been around so much smoke of friends that I didn't really want to. So I'm glad that I never started (risas).

D.C: So, how often did you go home then?

J.E.B: Well, about twice a year. We got two weeks each time.

D.C: Okay. And they didn't really care where they went, did they, but you always went home?

J.E.B: I always went home. Most people did; they were anxious to see the family. And at that time, the trains were running regularly, that was about -- I mean, there weren't any planes -- well, there were some planes, I guess, but I didn't want to take the plane. And I enjoyed the ride. And at that time, why, our local railroad station had regular trains going through, now they only have one a day going each direction, so, it's quite different.

D.C: Okay. So how did you find out about the invasion on D-Day?

J.E.B: Well, I was really involved in it in a way. I had midnight duty at the personnel office and I was the only one in the office. And the Coast Guard had 83 cutters -- 83-foot cutters they were called, which were involved in the D-Day -- in the invasion. And a

captain of one of the 83-foot cutters came from California and picked up his orders while I was on duty. And I remember that, because he asked me if I were from California and I said, no, I'm from Ohio. He said, well, there's somebody back in California that I know that looks like you (risas). So that's how I was -- you know, what, in a way I gave this captain his orders, and I don't know what happened afterward. Quite a few of the 83-foot cutters were lost, but some of them performed some good duty trying to rescue some of the people off bigger ships as they were going into the water or something happened. So I suppose I found out about it maybe at the office or from the radio or newspaper.

D.C: Okay. So, would you say that the atmosphere kind of changed in your office and things after D-Day. Did people feel like the war was going to end sooner then?

J.E.B: No, because there were still the war with Japan. And also, I was in Times Square the night of the VE Day, which was when the war in Europe ended. And also VJ Day, when the war in Japan ended.

D.C: I bet those times people were pretty celebratory?

J.E.B: Yes. And I don't remember which of those two nights it was, but believe it or not, I ran into a young man who had been in my Sunday School class back in Sandusky.

D.C: Did you guys kind of reminisce about -- did he talk about what he had been doing?

J.E B: No.

D.C: Was he in the service?

J.E.B: Yes; oh, yes.

D.C: So, what did you guys hear about, like the Battle of the Bulge that when [no claro]?

J.E.B: I don't remember too much about that.

D.C: Okay. Just tried to find -- so when Franklin Roosevelt died, how did you find out and what was that like?

J.E.B: Well, all I know is that he died at Warm Springs, Georgia. And I guess that's when I found out that he had a girlfriend besides his wife. And later I learned that the girlfriend was with him when he died, and Eleanor was someplace else. But when she arrived in Warm Springs, the other woman went out one door and she came in another one. That's something I've heard since.

D.C: So, did you, like, find out from the radio, then, probably?

J.E.B: Radio or papers maybe.

D.C: So, like, how much did people know about Truman, and, like, what did they -- did

they think they would be capable of finishing the war or --

J.E.B: Well, I think people didn't know too much about him as vice president at that time. I guess we knew more about Bess than we did Harry. Later, it turned out that Harry Truman, historically, people think he was one of our better presidents. Because he had some tough decisions to make, and he made the decisions and didn't involve killing a lot of people, but if he hadn't made a decision to use the bombs, then many more of our military would have been killed.

D.C: So, after the war ended, how long did you expect you'd be staying in the military?

J.E.B: Well, when I enlisted originally, it was for the duration and six months, and I was discharged in May the following -- 1946.

D.C: Okay. And that was just because your time was up basically?

J.E.B: Uh-huh.

D.C: Okay.

J.E.B: And I was no longer needed in my job.

D.C: So, what did you do after the war?

J.E.B: Well, I was entitled for benefits under the GI Bill, but I didn't want to go away to college. But I did take some courses at the local business college to refresh my shorthand, especially because I had -- I had typed always, but my shorthand I didn't. So I did that and I got a man -- a young man who delivered groceries to my house said his boss needed someone in his office part time, so I applied for that job and worked at the Sandusky Butter and Egg Company. We didn't sell butter, we didn't sell eggs, we sold -- our main product that we sold was beer and then some groceries. So I worked for them part time until his other regular office person quit, and then he hired me full time. So, I had that job for a number of years.

D.C: Okay. Okay. So, like now that the war is over, what do you think you would have done if you hadn't been in the military? Like, would you -- you would have just kind of been doing what you had been doing?

J.E.B: I probably would have stayed at the Merchant's Retail Credit Bureau.

D.C: Okay. Do you think -- well, I guess you sound like -- you probably wouldn't have been satisfied with yourself after that Fourth of July if you hadn't joined, is that correct?

J.E.B: Well, I didn't give it a second thought. I mean, I had made the commitment and it was sort of like going away to college, then, because I was out on my own. And then

later my father died not too long after I returned from service, so I had to get a regular job and support the family. My younger brother was still in high school. He worked, but my mother needed my assistance financially.

D.C: So, did being in the military really, like, change your ideas about who you were, what you wanted to do?

J.E.B: Well, it made me know that I could be on my own.

D.C: Okay. So, after the war, what kind of contact did you have with people that you had served with or that you had met?

J.E.B: Well, I corresponded with them, especially at Christmastime; send Christmas cards and notes. And then later after I had retired and after my cousin had retired, we went -- there was this SPARS reunion in St. Louis, Missouri. And they had been having them every five years, but we had been working and hadn't been able to go. So we went to that and went a day early and stayed a day later to do some sightseeing. And quite a few people who had been stationed at the Embassy Hotel where we were there, and I have a picture of us. And there was quite a large group there. And that was the last time they had a reunion for the SPARS. People who were on the committee felt it was too much for them to keep doing it and they couldn't get somebody else. But then later, the Women in Military Service Museum was being established, so I'm a charter member of that, and I went to the dedication of that in 1997. It's at Arlington Cemetery. It was called the Ceremonial Entrance, the opposite end of where the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is at Arlington. And that museum they have -- or at that weekend that we were there, they had some people -- things for the different services and the Coast Guard had a dinner and we went to that. And then we went to some other things that they had going on, and then we went to the dedication. At the dedication there were a lot of people -- I don't know, they said the size of where we were meeting was so many football fields. I don't remember how many, but there were a lot of people there. And President Clinton couldn't arrange to be there because he had other commitments; that Al Gore came and spoke and some other dignitary folk, too. And there was a congresswoman from Cleveland, Ohio who was quite involved with getting the museum off the ground originally. And each of the states donated a certain amount of money. And I contacted our representative to see if he could get Governor Voinovich to give some money. And I was told by the governor's office that there was no money for that purpose, because if

they had given money for that museum, then other museums would want some money. But eventually the State of Ohio contributed \$50,000. I guess they didn't want to be left off the list that was being published. So there's always a way to find some money when you get pushed a little bit. At the dedication there was a wall at the entrance, and up above that wall there were 50 military people holding the flag of each of the states. That was quite impressive to see all of the flags up there.

D.C: So, what do you think about the movement to get a World War II monument on the mall at Washington D. C. or in that area?

J.E.B: Well, it recognizes people other than the military people, too. And the people on the home front sacrificed a lot and they really worked together. It isn't like the way people are -- is now, there's so much -- so many people against the war. And I knew -- I thought years ago if there would be another war, there never would be a cooperation like there was during World War II. The housewives were saving their grease to donate for military purposes. I can't remember now what they needed that for. And they accepted rationing, and a lot of women went to work in the factories. You probably heard of Rosie the Riveter that came out of that. What was that question again?

D.C: I was just asking about the World War II monument?

J.E.B: Oh, yeah. All of those people aren't being recognized, so -- and it's all, as I understand, private money that's being raised. There's no government money involved. There was some government money appropriated for the Women's Memorial because that was one of the first ones. And the one woman who was very much behind it was in the service, and she had a lot of contacts. And she's the type of person who would just keep going and asking until she gets some. And they published a stamp at one time with four different service women on, and some of that money went toward the memorial. But those stamps, didn't last very long. I bought quite a few of them, but then all of a sudden they stopped. It seemed like when they have a special stamp, they only sell it for a certain period of time and then somebody else wants a stamp to represent something.

D.C: Okay. I've got a couple of questions that I just thought of just now, and kind off the topic that we're talking about, but I was wondering what people from other services, like, did you get looked down on because you were in the Coast Guard or --

J.E.B: Well, no, because people knew that we were quite necessary. And also the Merchant Marines, not too much was known about them. But they were involved, too,

transporting material and food. And it so happened that one of my friends -- and I met two young Merchant Marine people who came into New York every once in a while. And we would meet them and go to dinner or go to a movie or something. And they were always glad to get into New York City because there was so much to do there. And the young man that I dated had red hair and looked like Van Johnson, one of the movie stars who was quite popular at the time. He was from Illinois, but I don't remember anymore -- what part of Illinois, but I often think about him and wonder what happened. But it was just a way to spend an evening when they came.

D.C: Okay. So, I was wondering, like, what were you doing around the time the Korean Conflict started?

J.E.B: Well, I was home, but my younger brother was eventually called to serve. And quite a few of his friends were, too. And the night before they had to leave for Cleveland by bus, one of the -- one of their girlfriends had a party and invited all of them there. And they didn't want their parents to come down to the bus station the next morning, so I took a car load down and left them there to meet the bus and then went home. My brother was stationed at Camp Canford,(ph) Washington and that was where they tested, I guess, some of the bullets that were used or the bombs that were used. And he met his wife out there. She worked a civilian job and was living with an uncle and aunt out there, and she was from Indiana.

D.C: Did you yourself consider joining again? Did you think they would require your services?

J.E.B: No. I could have joined the Reserves. And there was a woman who had been in the navy joined the Reserve and went to (loran) to report for -- whenever the Reserve had to report, I think once a month, and then during the summertime for two weeks for training. But I -- by that time my father had died and I didn't want to get involved again. I didn't want to have to leave my mother.

D.C: There's a couple more things that I thought of since we've been talking. what kind of information did you receive about, like, the progress of the war? Is it like today where you find out every evening on the news?

J.E.B: We only had radio and newspapers then, and they didn't cover it -- every -- not like now, every channel you turn to you get the same news you got on the others. Very -- I watch CSPAN a lot because there's no commercials and you hear things that you don't

hear otherwise, and people call in and give their opinions. But we just had the newspaper and the radio back then. And we didn't get the in-depth coverage on every -- I mean, it happens now and you know about it in an hour. But then, at least was a day or more. Of course, the magazines, too, you got information from them.

D.C: Okay. So I was just wondering, like, what would you -- from that time period, what was the most interesting memory? What's the story you like to tell the most, you think?

J.E.B: Well, I guess the one about the first night in New York City being New Year's Eve and then being there for VE Day and VJ Day. But I never talked too much about when I came back. I mean, I was busy getting into civilian life again.

D.C: Okay. Well, I think that's pretty much all of the questions I have. Is there anything that you'd like to add; anything that you think I've missed or . . .

J.E.B: Well, one thing I would like to see is the Women's Military Service Museum, the memorial museum be put on the schedule when high school kids go to Washington D.C. for a tour, because there's a lot of valuable information there. There's a place where we're all registered and anybody can go there. And if they want to look up something, another friend, another member of the service, if they are registered, then it's there. And also, I think, all former military people and former women military personnel and present register there. I think there was a 25 dollar charge originally when we registered and then they would have a complete list in the future of the people -- of the women who served in all branches of service.

D.C: Okay. Well -- I'm sorry.

J.E.B: I'm trying to think of something more, but --

D.C: Okay.

J.E.B: I'm glad that I had the experience of being in the military and felt that I was contributing to the war effort. Oh, one thing you mentioned about being looked down upon, when I told my minister that I had enlisted, he said, 'Not you, June', as if that was the most awful thing I could do. But when I was wearing a uniform, I behaved much better than -- I mean, extra better, watching what I did because I didn't want to disgrace the uniform. So some people have the wrong idea. We were supervised and it isn't like now where the men and women work -- serve together on ship and are thrown more closely into contact with one another. But then the whole newer generation lives differently than we do. But I understand the next generation -- the ex-generation, is that

what we call it?

D.C: I think so.

J.E.B: They are beginning to go back the other way, and aren't so -- they think more about how they are conducting their lives, because it's gone a little bit too far, especially some of these promotions on TV. I don't watch them, but sometimes when you are switching channels or in between when you are watching something, they have their promotions on and I just do not understand. Parents are so happy when they get -- have a nice healthy baby and then some of these in later years with all of the tattoos and things on their tongue, in their ears and everything, why, I just don't understand (risas).

D.C: Okay. Well, I guess if you don't have anything else, I think that will be the end of this interview.

J.E.B: Well, I hope it helps you. I said some things tonight that I ordinarily wouldn't have said, but I started thinking about it and it was part of my life, so I guess I don't have any regret (risas)

D.C: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

J.E.B: You're welcome.

Transcripción no. 12

Charlotte Coleman

SPARS (Guardia Costera)

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.43328/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Septiembre 12, 2005

Duración: 37 min.

Nombre: Charlotte N. Russell Coleman

Lugar de nacimiento: Cranston, Rhode Island, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: San Francisco, California, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Sin especificar

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fecha de servicio: 1944-1946

Entrada en el servicio: Enlistada

Rama de servicio: SPARS (Women's Coast Guard Reserve)

Ubicación de servicio: Palm Beach, Florida; Sheepshead Bay, Nueva York y Washington, D.C.

Rango mayor: Storekeeper de tercera clase

Prisionera de guerra: No

Entrevistador: Steve Estes

Colaboradora: Lara Ballard

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER)

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/43328

Sujetos:

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Transcripción

Entrevistador Steve Estes: My name is Steve Estes and today is September 12, 2005 and I'm interviewing...

Charlotte Coleman: Charlotte Coleman in San Francisco, California

S.E: Alright, Charlotte. So, The first question is one we just went over, just for the tape, when and where were you born?

C.C: Cranston, Rhode Island. September 5, 1923.

S.E: Urn-hum. And what'd your parents do?

C.C: Well, My mother lived-came from Sweden at age seventeen, with 50 American dollars and not one word of English. (risas) She was a Swedish maid; they were very popular in those days. My father was Irish and he was born in Rhode Island and he was a "rum runner."

S.E: So he actually sailed or...

C.C: Yes he was, he was a person who, I don't even know how much, he didn't have a heck of a lot of education, but he was genius on motors, boats, boats and motors and that kind of thing.

S.E: So, wait, So this is prohibition era? Is that what you mean?

C.C: Yes, it was. But he didn't do that forever cause after that he went into business, you know--but that's how he started off.

S.E: Did he ever run into trouble with the law?

C.C: Oh yeah. They were chasin' him all the time but they never caught him. (risas)

S.E: Good for you. So did you grow up in Rhode Island?

C.C: No because of the rum runner thing we were in a little town called Somerset, Massachusetts, which was, very ah, there were only two houses there, there was a big dock and we were out in the middle of the bay practically. Mount Hope Bay.

S.E: Did you spend a lot time on the water when you were a kid?

C.C: Oh yeah, I got skin cancer all over to prove it (risas)

S.E: Urn, were you, were you working on your dad's boat?

C.C: Oh no. I was just a baby when that was happening.

S.E: So did you just go out for fun or fishing or what did you do?

C.C: Well I didn't, I was too young to go out on the boat then, I went on, my father always had boats after that, I went on boats after that, and my mother and father were separated so I

didn't go out on boats anymore but I grew up on a-we moved back to that little house on Somerset, ah and ah I lived right on the beach, grew up there, and I was there 'til I went in the service

S.E: So just a little bit. Was the Depression hard on your family?

C.C: Not really, because my father had made a lot of money, he worked later, but he'd made a lot of money doin' that so we were ok through the Depression.

S.E: Oh good, um and when World War II started when did you decide to get involved?

C.C: Well, I ah, I, you know it was a nice little town I grew up in, it was right on the beach but there was nothing to do, there was, I worked as a bookkeeper for a gas station for a little while and I worked at making torpedoes down at Newport, Rhode Island, but there wasn't any place for women and I didn't, I didn't go to college so when World War II came I thought "Oh, good! I can get away from Somerset." (risas)

S.E: So when you were in the torpedo factory where you a sort of Rosie the Riveter type?

C.C: I, I was. Yeah I did the, I, I forgot the name of it, I had to cut the thing where the piston fits in. Yes we made the whole thing and when it, when it, if it hit, we made them both for planes and the submarines and it was, it was ah, it made a hit, if your name was on it, if your torpedo made a hit, your name was up there, that you made a torpedo and it worked.

S.E: So later on, you mean, when the torpedo went into a boat?

C.C: While we were making them, when it would happen, yeah. I worked down there for a few years.

S.E: So did you actually put your name on the torpedo?

C.C: No but they knew who made 'em, they're numbered and they knew who made them and what such and such torpedo sunk a ship and something, your name would go up there.

S.E: Do you remember how many of your torpedoes ... ? Urn, so how long did you work in the torpedo factory, about?

C.C: Couple of years.

S.E: And um, so when, when did you decide to go from that to actually joining the Coast Guard?

C.C: Well, what happened was (risas) when we got hired at the torpedo factory, women would get paid the very same amount as men and I was pretty good at this job I was doing. So these high school kids would come in and I taught them how to do that and pretty soon they would be in another shop supervising, so I said you promised, I went down and talked to the

admiral, head of the whole thing and I said, "You know, you promised that women would get the same. Here I am training these guys and they go on and get a better job. You keep me on this job." I knew I was doing a good job because it was so hard to cut, it had to fit perfectly so it didn't leak, you know. And ah, he had no excuse for why we, why women weren't getting paid the same but ah, so I quit and he pulled my social security number for six months.

S.E: So you were kind of black listed?

C.C: They certainly did, it was so really, completely unfair. And ah, so my mother wasn't working or anything so I took her social security number, worked as bookkeeper. (risas) for awhile. But you know, it was, across from where I lived, Somerset, was Fall River, which a, is the saddest city in the world, Fall River, Massachusetts, you know, there was just nothing there, wanted to get away from there.

S.E: So you said your mom was very opposed to you signing up?

C.C: Well, my mother and father were separated. I was an only child, and you know, and she had no family here. They were all still in Sweden and my father's family weren't the greatest and you know, so I was leaving her alone basically.

S.E: How did you finally convince her that you should go?

C.C: Oh I was going, And as soon as I got 21 I went.

S.E: And why the Coast Guard?

C.C: Well a friend, you know, a friend of mine had gone in the Coast Guard so I went up to Boston to see what was going on and it was the Coast Guard did something really clever. Every, every, from the bus, all the bus stations, and all the train stations, there was women's feet prints all the way to Coast Guard headquarters where you joined. (risas)

S.E: That is a clever recruiting strategy.

C.C: Yes it was, very clever.

S.E: So you, you followed the footprints straight to the recruiting center?

C.C: Right, yeah but I was too short. I wasn't tall enough, I had, they sent me home and he said every time you go through a door way, reach up and try to touch it. Well, I did it for a few months, well, I went back: "No your still ... go home and do it again." I don't think I got any taller but I guess by then they needed me. (risas)

S.E: They we desperate. So you were saying, um, when you went to boot camp, it was the kind of hard core experience

C.C: Dh it's not like that. We were in a, Palm Beach, the Palm Beach Biltmore Hotel, which

was closed. It was a very elegant hotel. I mean we had six bunks in a room but you know, it wasn't very nice, it was not hard at all. We were not learning to fight or anything. What we're mostly going to be is office workers. Coast Guard didn't put any women on their, on their ships.

S.E: Was that your first time out of New England?

C.C: Yes, I think it was yeah.

S.E: What were, what were your impressions of the South? You were in Florida, I guess ...

C.C: Dh no, you're right. I had, I had been to Florida. My father had arthritis. Rheumatism, they called it. And He usually go down to Miami ah, frequently, and I went, think when I was a freshmen in high school. I went down, I went to school half the year in Somerset and half the year in down there, and luckily I passed but I had, I had been to Florida before and I like Florida.

S.E: You said on the phone that, urn, you a met a women who you knew was a lesbian in boot camp, can you talk about that?

C.C: Well, I didn't know she was, she picked up on me I guess cause, she'd tell me what gay meant. I had never heard gay before and she ah, she was older but that's how I came to California. We all wanted to get stationed, you know when you get out of storekeeper school, you say where you want to get stationed and she was lucky. She got stationed in Long Beach, most of us had to go to Washington. And ah, so then when, but I kept in touch with her so when I, when we got discharged decided to stay in Long-she came from Chicago, she decided to stay in Long Beach for awhile and so I came out and joined her because as I kid I wanted to come to San Francisco. I just knew I wanted to come so I came to San Fran-I think it was, ah, ah, I don't know what it was called but we paid two cents a mile on the train and we could go as many miles as we wanted.

S.E: Was this just for military folks?

C.C: Yes, when we got discharged, they gave us this deal, so I got as many miles, it took me a month to get here, but I got off at every station, and I went in every direction and I went to every big city all though the United States but I knew I wanted to end up in San Francisco. So I came here and stayed for a few days and went down and joined Shirley in Long Beach cause she was staying at place where they had room for me to stay with her. So I stayed there. At the end of the summer she decided to go back to Chicago and go to school so I came up to San Francisco.

S.E: When you said it was easy, I want to go back to boot camp, you said easy, what, do you have any memories of what you did? Like what an average day was like, or what you learned?

C.C: Well, I don't, we didn't seem to be in classes too much. We learned how to march and salute (risas) shake hands with an-one of the officers said that shaking hands with women was like shaking hands with a bunch of fish and believe me, when we graduated he had to have the sorest hand in the world. (risas) And we got to go to the beach a couple times a week. We march over the beach. I don't remember any kind of hard work, you know, I assigned part of the time to food detail. We served the officers first and the other people then after, then after lunch was over I had to mop the floor (risas) Just things like that, that's what we did. We were, you know, going to work in offices, we didn't, most of us, you know, knew what we were going to do and knew what kind of work we were going to do. I don't remember what they taught us, probably about the Coast Guard. I don't remember classes there. I remember classes in Storekeeper school.

S.E: Well, let's go to storekeeper school. You went to Sheepshead Bay, New York. What was that like?

C.C: Well, that we did go to class everyday and they were teaching us how to be [no claro] you know, just what you would learn in high school classes.

S.E: You had already been a bookkeeper so did you know all that stuff?

C.C: Well ah, yeah, yeah, it wasn't anything new but it was for some people. It wasn't for me but I have to say I was rotten at typewriting in high school and we had a, an instructor from somewhere in the South with an accent that we could not understand and he had a stick and he would hit it. I learned how to, In two weeks I learned how to type with a typewriter better than I had in three years of high school.

S.E: Was he actually hitting you guys?

C.C: No, he wasn't but he was hitting down and every time he hit we had to stroke a key and something about that made us good. (risas)

Steve Estes: I guess it worked.

C.C: (risas) I never did understand it.

S.E: Urn, what were the other women like. I mean were they all about you age? Did you get along with them?

C.C: There were a lot of older women, but mostly still young. There were a lot school teachers

that I guess were bored with school teaching and joined and ah, basically young.

S.E: Did you know folks who were in ... did you know women who were in the other services?

S.E: No, so you couldn't compare the SPARs to say, the WAVES or the WACs?

S.E: Ok. So when you got out of the second school, when did you find out you were going to Washington?

C.C: Well, you know, just, once you finish, then you ask you for this and that, and then they say, "This is where you're going, and then they send you know there." That's it.

S.E: What were your impressions of wartime Washington?

C.C: Well, gosh, Washington was a beautiful city to be stationed there but it was rotten for service people. You know, there were millions of them, I mean, waiting to get on a bus or something like that was just awful. And like, I got paid eighty dollars a month and I sent twenty home to my mother so we were all in that shape unless it was somebody who had a lot of money, which I didn't have any, and you know, we'd be waiting in line to go to a restaurant or something and they'd take everybody ahead of us. They knew we didn't have any money. Things were really rotten. New York City was wonderful but Washington DC was rotten to us. Ah, but you know we got along. (risas)

S.E: And ah, do you remember any friends you made while you were in the Coast Guard?

C.C: Well, the one, yeah the one who told me what gay meant, her name was Shirley Davis, she was from Chicago. My roommate in Washington was from South Carolina, her name was Sarah, I've forgotten that. Oh, another one from Boston. I call her Jonesy, we'd call her, I forget what her first name was. That's all I remember right now but I was friendly with some of them for years, yeah.

S.E: And were they all gay, were some gay?

C.C: Oh no, none of them were gay. Shirley was but none of the others were, no.

S.E: Did they have any idea that you were?

C.C: I don't think so. I wasn't about to get into trouble.

S.E: Was it pretty well understood that if someone was openly lesbian that they would get kicked out of the Coast Guard?

C.C: Never was mentioned.

S.E: Really?

C.C: The only lesbians that we recognized I knew, I don't know if I told you that were cooks and bakers and they were also our softball team. And they were, you know, obvious to me

they were and I think most people and we loved them. They played good softball and cooked good food and nobody ever mentioned anything what they were or anything but you know, you just knew it. And nobody talked about it, said anything about, thought about it. Certainly the officers knew but they didn't, they behaved themselves, they never got into trouble. They were all pretty obvious.

S.E: Did you ever play softball?

C.C: No.

S.E: That wasn't your thing?

C.C: No.

S.E: What did you do for fun?

C.C: Drank beer. (risas) Ten cents a glass, it was. Right near or barracks. And, I don't know, went sightseeing cause there was a lot to see in Washington, you know. And we every weekend we'd go somewhere--every weekend we could also go to New York City. Stay in the Waldorf Astoria for three dollars a night. (risas) Well, they had four or five of us to a room. And we got free passes for restaurants, I mean, good ones too, and plays and everything. New York City was absolutely wonderful to service people. We had this one, I think it was 99 something Broadway and we stood in line there and we get up and we got right to the, what do they call it in New York, subway, and we could right to that address and get a ticket for dinner, a ticket for hotel, whatever we want. And right down in Times Square, I think it was Pepsi-Cola, right there in the middle, all the Pepsi you wanted to drink and free hotdogs.

S.E: So you were in your uniforms'?

C.C: We had to wear our uniforms. We didn't have anything else.

S.E: What did you think of your uniform'?

C.C: Well, let me tell you 'bout 'em. We were, every weekend we were in New York practically and ah Easter Sunday down 5th A venue we voted the best dressed people on the street. (risas) In the uniform. Yeah, the uniform was fine, easy and what not.

S.E: So you looked pretty sharp'?

C.C: Well, we looked pretty good, I guess.

S.E: And urn, let me see, I know you were just, you say you just doing bookkeeping but what kind of stuff would come across your desk'?

C.C: In the service'? Well, first, my first job was, that, Coast Guard pe-all the men that manned the lighthouses all over the United States, they were Coast Guard people too. Coast

Guard was in charge of them anyway. And they got a pension and they were retired and they were all over the world. They would be in New England and some of them were down in Miami, well, they had to send in a postcard when they got their check saying they were still alive. They were old, God, they were old and you could hardly read their names, the way they wrote their names on the thing. And that was my job to match up the postcards with the guy so he'd get another check and it was hard to do. And so I did that for a while but then in, when you're in the service you have an insurance policy. And everybody had it, they almost made you buy it, called NSLI, National Service Life Insurance, I guess it was, and they came in from all the Coast Guard people, all over the place and it was my job to take these cards, take this information whatever from the checks and run a, tape on an adding machine and it went on for three or four days and it all went into a big box. Nobody was to come near it, or touch it. Just me. Until I got to the end. And whenever, nobody knew when I made a mistake or not, but whatever the total said, that's what, then they gave me a check and I delivered it. They didn't want anybody to know about it. It was millions of dollars and, but they gave it to me cause no one expected me to bring this million dollar check over to the insurance company and I got the rest of the day off. And I'd always try to get it finished early in the morning. (risas)

S.E: Well, I've got one more, better take a couple hours on this until I start the next day. (risas)

C.C: But no one ever knew if it was correct or not. I think that I had but running another, and I guess they thought I did that ok so they just accepted it. There was no way you could go through and corrected it. It would take you forever. I thought I did most of it right.

S.E: Were your superior officers mostly women or were they all women?

C.C: Dh they were all women.

S.E: Did you feel like that same tension that you felt at the torpedo factory between the SPARs and any men?

C.C: Oh no, no. There wasn't any of that, no.

S.E: So you had a pretty good relationship with the officers?

C.C: I had a very enjoyable time with, with everybody and what I was doing. And when they disbanded it, I would have liked to stayed on. They offered me job because I was [no claro] Coast Guard headquarters, they offered me a Grade-7 job, well I was not about to stay and work in [no claro], no matter what they paid me. I mean, I'd been there long enough and I wanted to come to California.

S.E: Do you remember when the war ended, what V-E Day or V-J Day, what your feelings

were?

C.C: I don't really, I don't remember ah, I remember when Franklin Roosevelt died because they had, we had kind of funny stockings, awful stockings they made us wear and they made us parade down and they made us, it wasn't dirt, it was something that didn't get muddy in winter time, it was cinders like, and they made us knell down, in the cinders. [no claro] I remember that because we were down on our knees for a long time and it was hard.

S.E: Praying for the fallen president. ...

C.C: That the country didn't fall apart. I remember Washington DC always had parades. Anytime anybody came to town we'd have a parade. If you volunteered for the parade, then you got the rest of the day off I was always doing that. That was fine.

S.E: Who were some of the people that came to town? Do you remember any?

C.C: I don't remember. We didn't know them. Admirals and generals and you know, and they came to town and we'd have big parades, especially during the war.

S.E: Were there any celebrities that came through? I know for troops sent over seas they got to see some the leading lights of the day.

C.C: No there wasn't. There was a couple oftimes that some entertainers came to town and sometimes, somebody get a free pass but it wasn't anybody that I think I ever paid much attention to.

S.E: I had a question that just slipped out of my head. So, I guess one of the formal questions I have down here is did you or anyone else face discrimination because of your sexuality?

C.C: They didn't know it. Nobody knew it. No. And I don't know anybody there that I ever heard it any, I know down in Long Beach where my friend had been, they certainly, and they did the black drum thing, beat them out, cut the buttons off their uniforms. Yeah, they did that down in Long Beach.

S.E: Really? For women?

C.C: Yeah, but I wasn't-they were disbanded by the time I got down there. But she told me about that, it happened a couple of times. And they just drummed on the drums, beat them, and then they stood them up there, cut all their buttons off.

S.E: Did you ever talk to anybody that it happened to?

C.C: No, I didn't. I only heard from her because she was stationed there, that that happened. There must have, if anybody would be in our barracks, or anything, certainly, we never knew it, you know and ah, but obviously they were obvious, which was dumb.

S.E: But you were saying that the people on the softball team, were the cooks and bakers, they were obvious.

C.C: They were obvious yeah. And for some reason no one ever, I mean I never heard anybody ever, you know, we'd look out there, look at them, we no one ever, they never, I don't think they ever got into any trouble but, they looked [no claro] but you couldn't prove it. No. When I got fired from the Internal Revenue for being gay, they couldn't, they never could say, even though they read my mail, tapped my telephone, and came on vacation, every weekend they went, followed me. They [no claro] They fired me for association with persons of ill repute. They could never say I was gay. They just couldn't. They couldn't prove that.

S.E: When was that? I mean this is years later I know but. ..

C.C: Yeah. I, don't ask me what year it was. I worked for the Internal Revenue about ten years.

S.E: But was it the '50s, the '60s ...

C.C: Well, when I came out of the service, came out here, I worked as a book keeper for awhile and then I got [no claro] so ...

S.E: Like '46 or '47.

C.C: I worked about eight years with one company. What would that make it?

S.E: That would make it like '54 ...

C.C: '54. That's when I went to work at Internal Revenue. I worked about ten years.

S.E: So mid '60s ...

C.C: Early '60s cause I started in [no claro] early '60s. That's why, I had a very good job at Internal Revenue and I like it but they were, came a point where they cutting down on employees and weren't hiring anybody. Internal Revenue had an investigation staff where they investigated your very good, before you were hired. And ah, the investigation staff had nothing to do because nobody was being hired, they investigated anybody that was going up for a grade raise and boy they spent a lot of time with me. (risas) But they couldn't say, they could never say you were gay. They couldn't. They would like to but ah, association with persons of ill repute. (Irisas)

S.E: So did you feel that was a kind of like Cold War thing or was that just homophobia, straight up?

C.C: Oh yeah. Well, yes, you know, the Internal Revenue, they want, that's why they investigated it, you know, in called you in and I said you [no claro] tax and this and that and

they say, you know, if they had seen you sitting in a bar, or something "I'm not ah, that guy I saw him sitting down in the bar drinking, he's just a bum, I don't have to pay this tax." That's the kind of stuff you got back, you know, so they wanted us to be clear, pure.

S.E: Oh right. So you would be beyond reproach, so if you got challenged.

C.C: They did. They got caught in their tax return and you were the one that had to tell them they're gonna have to pay some more and if they had seen you doing anything wrong or anything like that [no claro] Heard of that one all the time. But that was why they were tough. I mean, the personnel office were tough. There's no other agency that it would make this much difference to.

S.E: And after that, is that when you went, began, when you went to bar?

C.C: Yeah, I did.

S.E: Where was the bar and what was it called?

C.C: It was the Front, Front and Jackson. It was in the old produce section.

Steve Estes: It was just called the Front, or the Front and Jackson?

C.C: It was, the name of it was the Front but it was on Front and Jackson. It was just beer and wine cause I didn't have enough money to buy a liquor license. (Irisas)

S.E: Why did you decided to go into being a bar owner after being a bookkeeper for so long?

C.C: Well, I don't know. I guess I was ready to do something-you know being a bookkeeper, working in an office, is not (risas) [no claro] I had already, I went to Golden Gate College for ah, seven or eight years, nights, because when I got hired, when I got hired as an auditor, my passing test pretty good because I got ten points for having been in the service and they hired seventy of us and sixty nine had college degrees and one didn't. And that was me. So I talked to my boss, I said, you know, I suppose I could, there was a G.I. Bill and I suppose I could, you know if I ever want to get a raise, I guess I should go. And she said that wouldn't be a bad idea so I went nights to school-I don't what I started that for.

S.E: Well, we were talking about how you became a bartender, not a bartender, a bar owner.

C.C: Well, of course I went to the gay bars all the time at that point in my life and ah, I had more fun I guess in bars than I did being a bookkeeper. (risas) I was gonna take the a, I was gonna take the CPA, the G. I. Bill was running out and I was just a junior I was never going to have enough time to graduate so I did a CPA review course and at the end and then I broke up with my girlfriend and I never did take the test. (risas) And I wasn't a CPA (risas) And I, so I had to do something and I heard about this bar for sale for practically nothing, some guy

wanting to get out. And that was it.

S.E: And I don't know if you ever read *Coming Out Under Fire*, did you ever read that book?

By Allan Bérubés

C.C: I don't think, if I ever read it, it was years ago, but I don't, I can't remember.

S.E: Well, it's basically about how you know, the war opened up all these possibilities for gay women, or gay men and lesbians, as they left towns, left small towns and went to these big cities. One of the things he says is like, San Francisco, the gay community kind of exploded because you had all these veterans here ...

C.C: That's why I wanted to come to San Francisco. I heard about it gay or what not even back then, you know, that's why I was always heading this way, that's it.

S.E: And your bar became kind, I mean I guess it's kind of a legendary place ...

C.C: I don't know, you know the archives place for gays, whatever, they had a list of all the bars and they didn't have it down. I told them, I said, I never read about it, they didn't have it down, so they hadn't ah, I think they do now cause I told them but they, they hadn't gotten it. That was, wasn't way back then, you know, they aren't an old organization but I think they do now.

S.E: So when you started *The Front*, did you feel like it was, I mean this is going to sound kind of funny because you probably started it as a business but did you also start it as a community place, like a place to meet or ...

C.C: Well, I just started it as a business but urn, it did get to start of what, [no claro] Dell and Phil would be the same to lesbians in San Francisco, *Daughters of Billitus*. I just saw them the other night and they ah, they had already started the *Daughter of Billitus* and they didn't, there wasn't any other gay bar owner by women so they had, when they wanted to do a fundraiser or what not, they came down and talked to me so of course, I went along with it so some of my first fund raising things, not, I don't think we particularly raised a lot of money but we did it there, you know, I did a few things with them but they were reminding me I remember one but they reminded me of a couple others that [no claro] so that's how that happened, you know.

S.E: Urn. Let me see. Why did you join the American Legion Coast--or are you a member of Coast 448? So why did you decide to join.

C.C: Yeah. Well, just because one, some guy I knew ah, talked, he was in with all enthusiasm about it, just opened up and when he found out I was a vet, he said of you've got to join and I joined and I always stayed there because they had such few women and I thought they need

some women, whenever something special going on and they need some women, I came down and I don't go the meetings anyway but I do when they call me up and say please come to this and that so I do. And just because it's a good little group of guys and we're gay. That's it. The more members they have the better I think. That's all.

S.E: If you look back over your time in the service, which wasn't too long but you know, it was, you were young, what would it's legacy be for you? I mean, did it have a legacy for your life, being in the Coast Guard?

C.C: Well, I don't know if you'd call it a legacy but I, I came out with the idea that going into the service would be good for everybody. You know, you had to live by the rules, you've got to do this and that and take care of yourself, we had to do everything for ourselves, nobody was helping us with anything and that was good. It was good training, you know, I thought it was good. I think it wouldn't hurt anybody. I don't about, a legacy but that was my feeling.

S.E: I guess one last question. Well, two last questions and that is what do you think of don't ask, don't tell today?

C.C: I think it's stupid. (risas)

S.E: Why?

C.C: Well, it didn't add up to anything. Well, certainly you know that all the years there's always been many, many gay people in the service. Don't get caught or I don't think the overall percentage did and so they did, well, I don't know if you saw that article they wrote about the American Legion. Gay people could do the job just as good as anybody else, just because we're gay doesn't mean we can't do what we're supposed to do. You know. I just thought it was stupid. I never did see the point of it and obviously it didn't work too good.

S.E: And I guess the last question is kind of a catch all question, are there any thing I didn't ask you about your military service or your time in the Coast Guard that you wanted to talk about?

C.C: No. I don't think so. It wasn't a, it was a wonderful time for me and all that but it wasn't exciting, there was nothing special about it you know. I've been through it [no claro] write a book about.

S.E: Well, a lot of people say that. Even folks who were in combat say, oh you know, just a small part of much bigger thing and my little part doesn't mean anything.

C.C: That's right, it doesn't. I'm a bookkeeper. I just had to wear a uniform and that's it but it got me any from home.

S.E: That's a big deal. And now you're thousands of miles anyway on two cents a mile or whatever.

C.C: Yeah, right. That was a wonderful thing.

S.E: Alight, well I think that's it. The last thing I should say is thank you very much for talking.

C.C: You're welcome.

Transcripción no. 13

Mary Elizabeth Dorety

WAVES

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Entrevistadora: Dorothy Thompson

Colaboradora: Priscilla Minster

Transcriptora: Tina M. Stuhr

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Transcripción

Entrevistadora Dorothy Thompson: I am Dorothy Thompson. This is April the 30th, 2002. I am at Oasis in Rochester, New York to interview Betty Dorety.

Mary Elizabeth Dorety: I'm Betty Dorety. Legally it's Mary Elizabeth, but I've always been called Betty. I was born August 15, 1920, and I now live at 41 Great Meadow Circle in Rochester, New York.

D.T: When did you enlist in the services?

M.E.D: February 11th in 1944.

D.T: In which --

M.E.D: In the Navy.

D.T: In the Navy?

M.E.D: As a WAVE, yes.

D.T: And where did you do your basic training?

M.E.D: Basic training was done at Hunter College in New York City or the Bronx they called it, and I think I was about the 19th regiment that went through there -- battalion, I guess it was. We went from there -- you want to know where the other places were where I was serving?

D.T: How long were you at the Hunter there, just --

M.E.D: It was six weeks at Hunter College for boot camp. They called it boot camp.

D.T: For boot camp?

M.E.D: Yes.

D.T: Okay.

M.E.D: Yes.

D.T: Is the boot camp, was that difficult or --

M.E.D: Well, it was if you weren't used to that kind of a life.

D.T: All right.

M.E.D: We were up at 5:30 in the morning, and they took muster at 5:30 in the morning out on the street. See, the Navy had taken over apartment houses there at Hunter College, and there were eight of us that lived in one apartment and all in bunks, of course, but can you imagine eight women with one bathroom? This was quite a problem for a while, but we all got used to it. We figured out our own time and everything else, but I think the worst part was getting up that early. I was never really used to getting up that early or getting dressed or

going out in the street, and this was cold. This was in the winter, February and March.

D.T: It was cold?

M.E.D: Yes, it was very cold in New York.

D.T: And it's been your -- after that, where did you --

M.E.D: After that, I was sent to Sampson, New York. I was in the postal school there for six weeks, and -- it was nice because I was closer to home, except we never got any time off. We never -- we had liberty one weekend and we couldn't go beyond 50 miles, so I was limited to Canandaigua.

D.T: What were your accommodations there then?

M.E.D: We were living in regular barracks, they were.

D.T: Oh, regular barracks?

M.E.D: Yes. And you learned very fast the Navy way of doing things when you were there. I remember when I first went in, they issued the thing -- watch the bulletin board. Always watch your bulletin board every day. So I -- one morning I forgot and didn't watch it, and I found out later that all the -- everybody had to move their suitcases to the other side of the facility, which I didn't do, so I wound up with one full day of washing windows, washing floors. Believe me, I looked at the bulletin board after that. That was every place I went, the bulletin board was the first thing you looked at.

D.T: In every -- every place that you --

M.E.D: Yes. We had that everywhere. There was a lot of regimentation, which was good with that many people and so many people weren't used to this way of life. So it was the best way to handle them, I think.

D.T: And then after that?

M.E.D: After Sampson, I went to Quonset Point. They sent me to Quonset Point for a -- well, we did do -- we did do two weeks at the fleet post office in New York, and there we were exposed to all the other Navy people because it was the fleet post office, all our allies. There were the English and the French and the other allies all there, and this is where they would stay to pick up their mail, and then we would take it out. And we never went out with the mail to the docks, not there. I did do it in Boston once. And we picked up a ship that was full of German young soldiers, they were. In fact, the youngest, I think, looked to be about 13 or 14. Of course, at that time, I think Hitler was calling everybody to work at that point in the service. From Quonset Point I was sent to Boston. They had just opened a new facility there. The

Navy had taken over the museum of fine arts school, which was on the Fenway in back of the museum, which is on Huntington Avenue, and the Navy had taken it over and made it into a dependents hospital. And when I went there, I was put in charge of the post office. I was the only one there. Everybody else was medical, but I had -- I just had the post office. And from there -- I stayed there until near the end of the war, and they began discharging people. And I was sent to Newport, Rhode Island when they closed the dependents hospital, and I was there in the -- in the post office, oh, probably until -- well, the end of the war really.

D.T: The end of the war?

M.E.D: Yes, when they finally -- see, they let us out on what they call the point system, and those of us who were in, like, the post office or medical, anything like that that was still being used as a facility, we were given points. We had to have so many points before we could get out of service. So, even though the war was over in August, I didn't get out until November 1st. And I did not tell you, I was married when I was in Boston. I got married. I met this young man who was in the Navy, and he was stationed at the hospital and we -- I think it was after a year, we did get married. We were married in Boston.

D.T: Did you -- was there a problem with the Navy to become married at that time --

M.E.D: No.

D.T: -- the two of you?

M.E.D: No, there wasn't. No. We didn't have any problem. Of course, we just had to tell them.

D.T: Um-hum.

M.E.D: And --

D.T: No objections then, is what I meant?

M.E.D: No, no objections. No. And -- oh, you mean as far as being married because at that point a lot of married women couldn't go in service.

D.T: A lot of them couldn't go in and some --

M.E.D: Right.

D.T: -- and some of them maybe they weren't allowing them to remain --

M.E.D: Right. I know. We had a girl with us in Boston, and her husband was in service, too, but they let her in because he was overseas and they had no children, and that made a big difference too. But it was -- it was a very interesting life, it really was.

D.T: Now, were there people working under you, Betty?

M.E.D: Sometimes there were. Most of the time there weren't. I was doing it myself. And I

enjoyed it. I met a lot of people, a lot of very interesting people, people I probably never would have met, you know, had I not been in service because it was quite a change, quite a change in the lifestyle, everything else, but it was wartime and everybody was concerned about doing their bit. I had worked at Kodak prior to enlisting in the Navy, and it was -- it was nice to know that you were really doing something.

D.T: Um-hum.

M.E.D: And as I say, I met an awful lot of very nice, nice people, including my husband to be. And he was from Trenton, New Jersey. He was a pharmacist mate, and he worked for the dentist where we were stationed.

D.T: And you -- now, were you in a regular barracks there?

M.E.D: They had WAVE barracks, and they had the enlisted barracks for the men. They were two separate units entirely. So we really were never together unless we were at the ship service or even at the little snack bar that they had there for us in the recreation room, but otherwise, you know, you'd go into Boston.

D.T: For your --

M.E.D: We weren't that far.

D.T: -- for your entertainment then?

M.E.D: For entertainment, yes. Yeah. I know, and I remember when we were at Hunter in boot camp, I was so thrilled because Jose Iturbi and the Rochester Philharmonic, of which he was director at that point, they came to Hunter College and put on a concert for all the WAVES and I was just thrilled to death because I had seen Iturbi when I was home, and he had given a concert at Highland Park and there was a blackout. The bells were ringing, sirens were ringing and everything --

D.T: In '65?

M.E.D: -- which was very common.

D.T: '65?

M.E.D: No. No.

D.T: Before then?

M.E.D: This was -- this was while the war was still on --

D.T: Oh, while the war was on.

M.E.D: -- before I went in service.

D.T: Oh, okay. That's right.

M.E.D: And he -- he just kept playing the piano all the while there was a blackout. It was the nicest concert I think I've ever heard because he just kept right on playing the piano.

D.T: Now, did they have many blackouts in the Boston area at that time? No, this was --

M.E.D: We didn't have any in Boston.

D.T: No, this was Hunter. This was New York.

M.E.D: This was Rochester. This was in Rochester that I'm talking about at Highland Park when he gave the concert.

D.T: Oh, okay.

M.E.D: And -- no. He did go to New York and give a concert there, and that's why I was so thrilled because I had just previously seen him in Rochester. But they had different ones come through for shows while we were at Hunter, and, of course, once we got to Boston, we were eligible, as service people, to pick up tickets for ball games. I think I saw my first pro football game at that point, and it was -- it was very interesting. Of course, the Fenway is very well-known for ball games anyway, and we saw baseball games there, and, of course, professional football games were played there at that point, too, so -- and there were -- oh, there were different things to do. I remember we had a hurricane at one point during the summer while I was in Boston, and I had had a ticket for -- for a show in New -- in the city itself, and, of course, they canceled everything, so I never did get to see it. I was very disappointed, but there were a lot of things that they would give you tickets for. And, of course, the USO. You could always go to the USO.

D.T: You could go there?

M.E.D: Yes. They were very popular with everybody.

D.T: After you were married, were you able to live together?

M.E.D: We did. We got an apartment after we were married, and then -- we were married in May of '45. And, of course, that was after the -- the D Day, but VJ Day, of course, was in August, and we were already living in Boston. We just stayed there until -- well, until Jim got out of service in December, and then we went to Trenton, New Jersey, which was his home, and we stayed there at that point. The following -- we were married in May, and the following June, my first daughter was born, and she was born in Trenton, New Jersey. And after that, we moved up to Rochester, and then we had three other children after that; two more girls and a boy. So I've had a nice life.

D.T: You've had a nice life.

M.E.D: Yes, I did.

D.T: And you still have -- have a friendship with those --

M.E.D: Oh, yes.

D.T: -- that you were in the service with?

M.E.D: Oh, yes. In fact, I belong to WAVES National, which is a national organization of sea service women, and we have a unit here in Rochester, New York, the Finger Lakes Unit 49, and we've been active -- it was formed in 1988, and -- so we have over 50 members in that from all the surrounding area. And we -- we really, really enjoy being together. Of course, you know, it's like old home week when we get together.

D.T: They have reunions?

M.E.D: We've all had -- oh, yes. There are national reunions. The next one is to be in Portland. They had one in Boston; they had one in Cleveland; Hershey, Pennsylvania. I don't know where the next one will be. I'm not going to Portland. That's too far to go for a short time.

D.T: That's Portland --

M.E.D: Portland, Oregon.

D.T: -- Oregon?

M.E.D: Yeah. So, actually, you know, we're all together and we do a lot of things together. We even go out for lunch some of us. We have our meetings about once a month, and then we do things. We -- we do a lot for veterans organizations, we volunteer our time, which is what I do. And, of course, they're closer to our hearts than anything else I guess --

D.T: Yes.

M.E.D: -- having been through that.

D.T: That's true. Yes. So now I don't know if there's -- you have photographs?

M.E.D: Yes. Yes.

D.T: And what else do you have there? Oh, you -- just the photographs and --

M.E.D: Yes. Yes, and the biography part of it. Yeah.

D.T: Well, is there anything else you can think of then?

M.E.D: No. I think I covered just about everything. I'll think of it after I get home.

D.T: Well, that won't do us any good, will it?

M.E.D: No. But I think we pretty well covered it --

D.T: All right.

M.E.D: -- what the service was.

D.T: Then --

M.E.D: And I just wanted to add that I was never sorry I went in service.

D.T: Me either. I enjoyed it.

M.E.D: Never.

D.T: What made you -- why did you decide to do -- to go into the service?

M.E.D: Because my brother was in the Army and he was over in Germany, and I thought I can't do this. I was working at Kodak, and I was working on the old-fashioned calculating machines, you know?

D.T: Um-hum.

M.E.D: And I was doing that in the film planning department, and I thought, I'm not doing anything towards this war effort. If I were making parachutes or doing something like that, I'd feel as though I were doing my part. So I went past my father's store one day and right at the corner on East Avenue was a big poster saying, "Join the Navy. Be a WAVE." So that's exactly what I did.

D.T: That's just what you did.

M.E.D: Um-hum.

D.T: Now, when you were in the mail, was that just for that area or was mail going out to ships?

M.E.D: It was mail going out to ships and we had -- you know, the men used to tease us when we first went in, and some of them didn't like it because, of course --

D.T I know they didn't.

M.E.D: -- we were replacing them --

D.T: Yes.

M.E.D: -- in a lot of cases, and they said, "How do you think you're going to carry these great big mail bags?" I said, "We're not going to carry them. We're going to pull them." And I said that's what we did, but we had to prove our worth. And you did more than was expected of you for that reason, and, you know, it's very -- it's very difficult when you're competing with men --

D.T: It still is --

M.E.D: -- for jobs. Yes.

D.T: -- even though it's changed --

M.E.D: Yes.

D.T: -- considerably, it still is.

M.E.D: Right.

D.T: Yes.

M.E.D: But they figured we were too weak to do that kind of a job. So we'd do that, and we'd cart them out to the trucks so they could put them aboard ship, you know, take them to the piers. So it was -- it really was an experience.

D.T: And then -- and when you were out, did you continue your education under the GI Bill?

M.E.D: No, I didn't. I had --

D.T: You had a family.

M.E.D: I had finished at RIT --

D.T: Um-hum.

M.E.D: -- and I could have gone further. I was interested in costume design, and I didn't do anything like that. You know, that's what got me into the Navy to begin with because it was a French designer who did it. His name was Mainbocher, and he's the one who designed the Navy uniforms for the women, the WAVES. And I think that's one thing that drew me to it.

D.T: Now, I wouldn't have known that.

M.E.D: Oh, okay. So, you know, I didn't go on because at that point when we got out, I was pregnant, and by the time the baby came, my husband went back to school and I stayed home with the children, and I was very fortunate. I was one of the few, few people and then -- well, in any generation, who didn't have to go to work. I was very lucky. But I enjoyed being home with the children. My husband passed away about 13 years ago, but we have had 44 very happy years.

D.T: And so that's -- that's an accomplishment in itself.

M.E.D: Yes, it is, especially during wartime when we were strangers, and a lot of people would say, "That's not going to last." Well, there were five of us couples who were married out of that dispensary that I was stationed in in Boston, and there were two of them that took, so to speak. The others -- the other three couples all managed to get divorces.

D.T: Oh, they did?

M.E.D: Yeah. But there were two couples, Jim and me and this other couple in New Hampshire that stayed together very happily.

D.T: Then do you think there's anything else then that you'd like to add to this, Betty?

M.E.D: No. No, I think that's pretty well covered those years, I think.

D.T: All right then. So we thank you for giving us your --

M.E.D: You're welcome.

D.T: -- input on that.

M.E.D: You're welcome. I'm sure there's going to be a lot of stories you're going to pick up out of this.

Transcripción no. 14

Annelle Bulecheck

WASP

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Nombre: Annelle H. Henderson Bulecheck

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Lugar de origen: Louisiana, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Blanca

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fecha de servicio: 1943-1944

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Entrevistadora: Lisa Beckenbaugh

Colaboradora: Terry Beckenbaugh

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Transcripción

Entrevistadora Lisa Beckenbaugh: Miss Bulechek, could you please state for the record what war you served in and the branch you served in?

Annelle Bulechek: I served in the Army Air Corps, which later became Air Force, but in World War II, it was the Army Air Corps, in World War II.

L.B: Okay, uh, what was your rank, and where did you serve?

A.B: We were promised our commissions, we went through the same training that the boys--men did; we had to have previous flying experience, private or commercial license. But, uh, we were promised our commissions, matter of fact, I went to Advanced Officers Training School in Florida, but, uh, we never did get our commissions until, uh, thirty-five years later, when they took the first woman into the Air Force Academy, and said that, "First woman to fly military aircraft." Then we got a little upset, and Barry Goldwater, who was the Senator from Arizona, got up in front of the congressional hearings and said, "What about the sixty million miles the girls flew in, uh, World War II, and they flew every plane in your inventory, from the smallest, uh, Stearman to the P-51 to the B-29?" - two of our girls got to fly the B-29 when it first came out. And he said, "Those were not military aircraft? That 80% of every plane that was ferried from factory to embarkation was flown by a woman, but those weren't military aircraft? 90% of every target that was towed for air-to-air combat training and ground-to-air combat training was flown by a woman, and those were not, uh, military aircraft, I gather?" And Congress says, "Ooh! Yes, they were." So we got beautiful discharge papers for honorable service, and, uh, uh, veterans benefits, and everything, but we never got our commissions. But we were subject to court-martial, we were subject to all Army orders, we ate in the Officers' Mess, we slept in the Officers' Quarters, we obeyed every rule that the officers had, except we never got commissioned.

L.B: Hm.

A.B: Because they didn't have to in those days. [risas] That's that's a story of- you asked for my rank, I'm a WASP, World War II, proud of it.

L.B: Okay.

A.B: But no rank. We never got a rank.

L.B: All right, uh, how about if we start with some background, and you said you were born here in Lake Charles?

A.B: No, I was born in Amarillo, Texas, but my family - the Dees family, where my mother was a Dees, and, matter of fact, the port down here used to be known as Dees Port, so it's an old family establishment, and I'm the last of my generation still living, and, uh, I, uh, graduated in 1936 from Lake Charles High School with Jesse Knowles, who was Senator - I think everybody knows Jesse - and Ham Reid, and I said, "Every reprobate in town graduated in 1936." And, uh, then I went to work at Muller's, in the Advertising Department, in 1936, for 9.00 dollars a week, and, uh, in 19 - if they, I said, I'd work two years, if they would send me to the New York office and let me work up there for a while. So they did, and I came back in '38 and became Advertising Manager of Muller's, the job that I held until I, uh, entered the, uh, service in '43.

L.B: Okay. Were there a lot of women doing the job that you were doing at the time, or was this, was your position rare?

A.B: You mean advertising?

L.B: Yes, I mean advertising.

A.B: Oh, yes, very rare. Yeah, they all, all had been men, yeah. But, uh, I was interested in it and had my own agency when I came back here, later, after the war. But, uh, I'd always started flying out at the, uh - the old people will remember - the little field that, uh, West had, Earl West had, out where the Bob [sic - Broussard] coffee farm used to be, and, uh, there were a few, like Zita Gardemal and me were the only women that took - no, Mary Freeman was also in that group - that took flying lessons out there, and made buddies with all the old men that had planes and flew and so forth, and we helped form that, uh, Civil Air Patrol I was telling you about immediately after the war. And, uh, so I'd always been interested in flying, and had gotten my license, private license before the war, before the war in the late '40's, early, you know, like take 2.00 dollars a week, which was big money in those days, and go take a flying lesson. So, uh, that's the way I got to flying, but my job was, uh, at Muller's at the Advertising Agen-, Department.

L.B: What age did you start your flying lessons?

A.B: Well, I was about, uh, eighteen or nineteen, I guess.

L.B: You said there was three other women that were flying with you at the same time?

A.B: Yes, yeah, they're both dead now.

L.B: Okay. And you became a licensed pilot that way?

A.B: Yes.

L.B: Uh, when did you, uh, officially become a licensed pilot?

A.B: Oh, gosh, it was in '41, I guess.

L.B: Okay.

A.B: Yeah. Took quite a while.

L.B: Talk a little about the Civil Air Patrol.

A.B: Well, a lot of people didn't even know we - we had our fiftieth reunion several years ago; I have all the information on that at home. Uh, it was formed to patrol the Gulf, mainly, for, uh, foreign agents coming in in submarines and infiltrating through the Gulf passageways into the United States, and, almost like the terrorism thing that we're under now - oh, not really the same, but similar. And we flew, uh, missions for the Air Force, and, on these little planes, now these are little Stear - I mean, uh, uh, Bellancas and Taylorcrafts, and small planes, in other words, that were owned privately. All the Civil Air Patrol is still all private airplanes, and it's very active here in Lake Charles now.

L.B: Okay. How many were there, how many pilots were there, there were that were flying these missions?

A.B: Oh, you ask me that, I'd say, maybe, ten, twelve.

L.B: So, it was a, a very small group.

A.B: A very small unit, but there were units in Lafayette, and units down near New Orleans, and up, all along the Gulf Coast.

L.B: Okay, uh -

A.B: That was part of the, part of the training I had before entering the WASPs.

L.B: Okay, and you started the Civil Air Patrol in 1941?

A.B: No, no, no, no, this was after the war, it was probably early '43, or right after Pearl Harbor, I'd say.

L.B: Okay.

A.B: It was organized.

L.B: Okay.

A.B: Immediately, uh-hum.

L.B: All right. And when did you, did you get interested in the WASPs organization?

A.B: When I first heard about it.

L.B: And that was?

A.B: That was in '43.

L.B: In '43?

A.B: And, uh, the women had been organized by Nancy Love. Eleanor Roosevelt was a big feminist as you re - you don't remember, but other people of that era do remember that she was a leader in fighting for women's rights, way before her time, and she had, and Nancy Love, and General Arnold, and of course Jacqueline Cochran formed the WASPs, but Nancy Love had taken some commercial, some - well, women had to have 2,000 hours flying time, and, uh, there were several of those, and, uh, some old barnstormers that had lots of hours, and she took them to Great Britain, where they ferried aircraft, and proved that women can do the same job men do. So then, Jacqueline Cochran got together with Eleanor Roosevelt, and they tackled Hap Arnold, who was the, uh, head of the Army Air Corps, and Hap Arnold pinned my wings on me, too, that's something I'm proud of; he was a doll. And, uh, they decided that they would take the women. At first, it was for private and commercial licenses. That's when I went in. And then later, it was thirty-six hours, they'd take 'em in. Well, they had 12,000 applications by the time they got through. Government had some flying training programs going in big cities; well, we didn't, we had to pay for ours. And, uh, they started this organization - first they were in Houston, at, uh, I've forgotten which field it was, not Randolph, Ellington, Ellington, I think Ellington, I'm not sure. 'Cause I wasn't in that first group. And, uh, they, they were not militarily organized at all, and they didn't have to go through primary, basic, and advanced like we did, and, uh, they lived in motels and so forth, and they'd ship 'em out in carts out to the airbase until the citizenry rose up, and said, "It's just horrible, they're just sending in these prostitutes out to the boys in those camps." And that's when they decided they 'd better get a place for the women to go [risas], so it didn't look like they were shipping in all these funny- looking women. Uh, so then they had Aloe Field was in Victoria, Texas, and the British had had a training encampment there, and, uh, they got with the government and said, we can't take 'em - Sweetwater, Texas, is where Aloe Field is, and it is the rattlesnake capital of the world and each year they have their rattlesnake roundups. And, uh, the dust storms in, uh, uh, Iraq right now remind me of the dust storms we flew in in West Texas, and it invaded everything, everything was covered in dust, and wind, and then it got cold, and it would snow, and then you'd suffocate and so, British wouldn't take it. So they cleared the British out, and they brought the women in. Well, you want me to just keep talking?

L.B: Sure.

A.B: Alright. Well, here we came in cattle cars ~ and I have some pictures of us in cattle cars - hanging on, like crazy; well, they were shipping cattle in, that's what they transported us in, and they took us out to Aloe Field, and, uh, it was a series of- well, they were actually huts - along the way, and there was two bays which held six girls, and there was six in this side and six in this side, and there was a bathroom in between that had one shower. I think we had two Johnnys, I don't remember. I think we might've had two basins. But you had a cot, and an orange crate for your belongings, and, uh, that was about all you had. And we took, take turns, you know, in the shower, and we had GI coveralls that we wore at the first, uh, size forty-four, was all they sent us. So we rolled 'em up, till they were in between our, it looked like we had a little skirt, and rolled up the sleeves until it looked like batwings, and then we'd punch in the waist as tight as we could 'til we were real cute. And we'd get in the shower, with Lava soap, and two of us would go in and wash each other down with brushes, and then rinse off, and then you'd brush the other one down, and that's the way we washed our GI coveralls, hang 'em up and let 'em dry. And, uh, that's where the training took place, the primary, the basic, and the advanced. Now, I'm gonna shut up for a while [laughs] because you probably have other questions that...

L.B: Oh, well, you said that you heard about the WASPs?

A.B: Oh, yes.

L.B: And, uh, in the newspaper?

A.B: Uh, I think it probably was radio.

L.B: Okay.

A.B: And I finally got the address, and, uh, got an application, which I filled out, and mailed back and they mailed back and sent me to Shreveport for the physical. Well, to be perfectly frank now, I can say, I was just a little nearsighted. And, uh, but if you're nearsighted, you could squint just a little tiny bit, and you clear got out the letters, you know, there a lot of ways to cheat on eyes, we learned 'em all. And, uh, but, however, from then on, I wore - of course, all of us wore Ray-Bans, you know, dark glasses, night and day, because that's a sign you were a pilot. And, uh, mine were ground to my prescription [risas]. I could see beautifully out to the distance, but I did have to wear my glasses. The Air Corps never knew that. And the guy that was, the doctor that was checking me up there was giggling 'cause he knew what I was doing, but he says, "You pass." I said, "Thank you." And, uh, that was, then you were sent back, and then you were ordered, you get your Army orders, and I was ordered to, uh,

Aloe Field, in, uh, Sweetwater, Texas. And, uh, one of the pilots here that had been - we turned out thousands of pilots, this was a very important air base in World War II, and I'm fighting now trying to find either an AT-6, which we trained pilots in, originally, to give 'em their wings, or a P-40, which, when Chennault died, we named the field Chennault after him, when P-40 was Chennault's plane. And, uh, have tracked down everywhere, including our sixtieth reunion was held in, in, uh, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, in Tucson, where the bone yard is. There's not a World War II plane in bone yard. And I've gone to everybody, I'm now working on Wright Whitman to see if I can get pieces of either one of 'em we can put together, because Northrop Grumman would help us put it together, and then we have Sowela, who has such a wonderful, uh, aircraft training program, that - we could fix an airplane, we don't need instruments, we just need a frame and a couple of wings and a tail, and, uh, and, uh, we'd like to have a propeller on the thing, but we can even build [risas] that if we have to. But I want to put it down on the lakefront, next to the tank. Now we had our Fort Polk men up here, which was the most touching thing last Saturday. All the last - there were about 3400 of 'em, too, with their families - came; we entertain Fort Polk each year.

L.B: Uh-huh.

A.B: And it's a very, this was very sentimental time because it was their last weekend to take, you know, be with their families, and so forth, and I do honor the Fort Polk. But it was an armored division in those days, and there was Polk and, and, oh gosh, I don't know all the names, I've forgotten all the names of the others, Livingston, and a whole bunch of Army division and infantry training camps. But we had our airbase here; it was being built before Pearl Harbor, because I was on my way with one of the officers from there -just about finished, as a matter of fact - to Lafayette. We had a little car radio, when we heard Berg Harbor had been bomb - Pearl Harbor had been bombed, so we turned around and went immediately back. And he had to report, and of course, I was mixed up and trying to get into the WASPs at this time, and working with the Civil Air Patrol. But we turned out thousands of pilots out here, in Lake Charles Army Air Base. And nobody really, this generation doesn't know it. They know it's Chennault, that we have Lockheed, Grumman, and so forth, and, uh, I want the people to know that this was originally one of the first and one of the foremost training bases in the United States, so I want an airplane next to the tank, and, Joe Toups, head of the Civic Center has promised the concrete and the straps and the, and the, uh, fixing up, everything up and the mounting of the airplane. If we can just get an airplane, so we're

just appealing all over the country. And I appealed to the national headquarters, I appealed to Wright Patterson, I appealed to everybody, if they've even got parts of these planes, we'll put 'em together. 'Cause we ought to have a plane down there. And people coming over the bridge, the boys see, the, the kids see the tanks, and they're excited, but if they saw an airplane, now, they're gonna pull off and find out what this thing is, an old World War II plane, and we'll get it fixed up, [clears throat] just like Ed Patton, Ed Morgan has fixed up [clears throat] General Patton's original command car to where it's spotless, no dents, nothing, it's gorgeous, and that's what we want to do with this plane, and mount it down there. And you see my point, in that we should have a symbol besides a tank, which we appreciate, and we love the men at Polk, but we have forgotten the airbase that was so important in Lake Charles, and the training of many, many, many pilots. And then, when I graduated, I re-, they moved the base from Lake Charles to Aloe Field, Victoria, Texas, for fighter air-to-air combat training. They were training fighter pilots there. And, uh -

L.B: So those, your first orders that you got came and they sent you to Sweetwater?

A.B: I, well, I requested, I had. Yeah, my first orders was to Sweetwater, when I graduated, we had two weeks leave or something and I came home, and, uh, then I reported to Aloe Field, because I had a first and second choice, and my first choice was Aloe Field, because I knew all the officers, I knew all the wives, I knew half the instructors, and it would be, it would be a comfortable base to go to. Well, many girls didn't go to comfortable bases, and, uh, so I was lucky in that respect. And I served there until we were disbanded.

L.B: Okay. Talk a little bit about your initial training. Did you, was it, was it men that trained you?

A.B: Oh, yes, and they did not want us to fly in their pretty airplanes. And, uh, I never will forget my primary instructor, I met him at our fiftieth reunion, we just had our sixtieth, we had our fiftieth reunion in Sweetwater. Tom Moore - I have a picture of him somewhere, a little picture here. And, uh, he was big, lanky, six-foot-four, Texas, rawbone kid, I think he was a year younger than I was, and he didn't want the women flying his airplanes, none of 'em did. And, first time you go out, they had a Gosport. Now, a Gosport was the earphones he had and the mike, and he was in the back cockpit of the PT-19, that's open cockpit plane, I'll show you a picture of it later. And, uh, student was in front, and you had earphones, but you didn't have your mike. So, minute you got in, he started cursing, and I had, didn't, I'd been raised rather sheltered life, among ladies and gentlemen, and I just didn't, well, I learned an awful lot

of new bad words, and he cursed from the time you took off 'til the time you landed, and that was bearable. But the worst thing he did, there are sticks, and there was a stick in the front cockpit that you had, and he had a stick in the back cockpit, and first thing he would do when you were airborne, was he would beat you with the stick. Every student that had him had black knees. I mean black and blue knees this big. And we limped when we got out, packing our thirty-pound parachutes and our three cushions that took to see up. And I [risas] when I went to the fiftieth reunion, I spotted him across the room and he spotted me, and we came running. And we grabbed and hugged, and I told the story on him, and, uh, we were flying right before we'd go on to basic; a lot of 'em had washed out in primary, I mean, boy, if you shed a tear, you were beat up, you immediately roll your bedroll up and go home. And, uh, I just gritted my teeth until one day, he was beating my knees again, they were so sore, and, uh, he said, "Take your g---d-----feet off the rudders." And I looked down, both my feet were flat on the floor. And he beat some more and he says, "I said, take your g-- d----feet off the rudders!" And I thought, I've had it. So, I put one foot up this side of the cockpit, and I put one foot up on this side of the cockpit. Can't do that any more. Stiff arthritis. But, pulled back on the throttle, so there was just the wind noise, and yelled - I had a good voice in those days - yelled back, "I don't have my g-- d----feet on the g-- d-- rudders!" Well, he opened the throttle, we went and landed immediately. So I went back to the barracks and I told the girls, I said, "I'm roll up my bedroll. I'm gone. I told Tom Moore off today." Well, I got a standing ovation first. Then, nothing happened that night, and, uh, next morning, after I got my parachute and my three cushions and I walked over to the plane, and he was standing there. He said, "Well, today, before you go on to basic, I want to see if you can do a few precision spins, give me a one-and-a-half precision spin and come out on the money." So we went up, and I did a one-and-a-half; I think I did it two turns, spin came out on the money, too. And I was his favorite student. I was his favorite student. So, I was telling this [risas] story at the fiftieth reunion, and his wife said, "Oh, that isn't Tommy at all, Tommy's such a sweet man." And I said, "He is now, but he wasn't sweet when he was [risas] training women pilots in World War II."

L.B: So you gained his respect?

A.B: Oh, yes.

L.B: Did you gain the respect of all the instructors?

A.B: I think so. Those of us - a hundred and twelve of us were in that class, and, uh - 'cause we graduated the beginning of '42, '44, we gone in in August of '43, got out in '44, January,

February. And, uh, a hundred and twelve went in, and forty-nine went through. Now, later on, they weren't as rough on 'em because they knew that we weren't gonna last. They didn't have the fatalities overseas they thought they'd have among pilots. And our main duty, the reason they formed the women's group was, to take over all the noncombat duties in the Continental United States to free pilots for combat, which they did. Hundreds and, well, no thousand, for combat. We took over all the ferrying duties, the testing duties, the, uh, tow target duties, everything that they were doing, we took over. And, uh, another funny story. There was some sabotage, but not that much. Uh, I was in the, right ready to graduate - this was flying JT-6s and we were on, we'd been flying night duty. And, uh, course, there were no instruments with needleball-airspeed in those days, and we were on a cross country, I think it was to go to Amarillo, and back in the PT-19, 'cause they were gonna really test us. January, it's cold, cold, cold, and, uh, open cockpit, and, uh, we would fly to Amarillo, to Wit-, Witch- , to, uh, Oklahoma City, Love Field, and back to Avenger Field in Sweetwater. So, I went out - I was first one out that morning, I was lined up first on, on the takeoff thing, and sheet, -- and, uh, it was early, early in the morning. Cold, miserably cold. Winter flying gear, can hardly move, and, uh, checked in at Operations. Well, they, the tower wasn't even open yet, and there was an enlisted man in behind the desk, and he said, "Are you Henderson?" I said, "Yeah." Well, I was Annelle Henderson in those days. He said, "Well, you take that first plane in the line there." I said, "fine," go out. I checked it all over, did the visual inspection, got in the front cockpit, and, the altimeter was off; it was just not working. I thought, well, I can fly in back as well as fly in front. So I got out, and I went and got in the back, ran everything up, everything ran up fine, taxied out, sun was just beginning to peek up, and opened it up, and ran down the runway, and about fifty feet off the ground, it went and it died. Well, they had extended, were extending the runway to bring in some twin engine planes, and it was all dug up. 'Course I had plenty of runway to get off and get up in the air, but, uh, this was all under construction, it was just a big chasm down at that end, but if you have engine failure on takeoff, you automatically do all these things without even thinking, I mean, you turn off the gas, you turn off the switch, you turn off everything, you tighten your thing. I took off my glasses; even had sense enough to do that, and go straight ahead, no matter where it leads you, you don't try to go make a turn, or get anywhere else safe, you go straight ahead. So we went down to this canyon, it was not a canyon, it was dug up, rough, and crash, bang, bang, bang, bang, and, uh, landed, and, uh, sat there a minute. And, uh, first thing you do when you taking an Army

aircraft up was fill in Form One when you land. Form One was sacrosanct. You told about your flight; you told if there was anything wrong, this and that and the other, and what your flight plan had been and what time you - well, I hadn't gone very far, and all I wrote in Form One was "airplane does not fly properly." There was nothing else [risas] I can say. And, I looked around, at a wing that's gone, this wing was gone; I later looked back and saw the tail assembly was screwed. But the main thing was, that light combing engine was driven right straight through the front cockpit and ended up right next to my rubberized headrest, which I'd hit with my head - that's all I had, was a bump on my head. And here I am sitting, with no airplane, and an engine right there, and nobody saw me go down. And I thought, this is not fair, because if you ever have any accident on the field, the ambulances come out, and the little jeeps with the red flags come out, and you get more attention. And I took my thirty-pound parachute and my three cushions, and left my Form One where it's supposed to be, and walked all the way back up to the Flight, to the Operations. There was an officer in there then, he says, "You want an airplane?" I said, "No, thank you, I've had one, and you'll find it down at the end of the runway." And he said, "Well, take an AT-6 and go up and shoot some landings and takeoffs, you know, that's get back on the horse." So I was happy to, I'd gotten a beautiful AT-6 and I was making, and they said, "Army 222, land immediately." They'd seen the airplane. And, uh, girls had all rushed to the hospital, they put me in hospital, I wasn't hurt, I got a bump on my head. The girls came rushing to the hospital, and I said, "Well, roll up my bedroll this time, for two, I broke one of their little airplanes." And then later on that evening, about nine or ten o'clock, Colonel Urban, who was the commanding officer of the field came in, and he said, "Nell, I have to tell you this." He said, "It was not pilot error. We found that an oily rag had been left in the engine." Well, we never did find out what - some of the girls had had sand put in their gas tanks, and they went down, but we never found out whether it was sabotage or just carelessness. But, a lot of the mechanics that worked on planes there were washed-out cadets, and they hated us for true. And, uh, all the-

L.B: Because you were flying and they weren't?

A.B: Yeah, they weren't. But the good mechanics had all been sent to either embarkation or overseas, where they were more, more badly needed. And, uh, we sort of had, not, not the dregs, they were - some of 'em were real good and some of 'em we adored. But there were some very resentful mechanics there, too, so, anyway, I lived through that, and, uh -

L.B: So they, the mechanics would sabotage the planes to make the women go down ~

A.B: We're, we had -

L.B: - out of resentment?

A.B: We had, we had no, we had no proof, well, the one that had the sugar in the gas tank, they did prove that. They could not prove mine, that could be carelessness.

L.B: Um-hum.

A.B: And I still think it was carelessness, somebody was very, very careless. Anyway, so those were my two experiences of being washed out, which I didn't get washed out for, so I did graduate, and I got my wings, and went to Aloe Field.

L.B: Were any of the women, uh, injured during any of these -

A.B: Well, I'll tell you the funny stories about this. Well, one of my classmates was killed. We were taking AT-6s from Texas to California, and, uh, low flying over Rodeo, it was Ro-de-o right, "Rodeo Radio, Rodeo Radio, how do you read me?" And this voice would come back, "Reading you soft and sweet, honey, reading you soft and sweet." [risas] So there were some good guys that we worked with. But, anyway, here we go, and we go fly across Texas, and we fly across New Mexico, and we fly across Arizona. The biggest storm to hit California in years hit right as we were getting ready to go over the mountains. I had a, a hydraulic fluid failure right outside of Phoenix, Luke Field, and it, the hydraulic system line broke, still mechanics, and spewed hydraulic fluid all over me and the cockpit, I mean the glasses and me and the windshield, so I had an emergency landing at Luke Field and checked out in some of their planes - oh, that was fun, I had a ball that weekend. The rest of the girls made it in, you know. Well, Betty Stein was killed - bolt, they don't know whether a bolt of lightning - but she flew into the side of a mountain. The rest of the girls made it over, but one funny, funny story that I tell. I love to talk to students and tell the funny stories, 'cause they think it's hysterical. And, uh, she was in this big thunderstorm, and she said, "Oh, Lord, just get me on the ground. I promise I'll tithe, I'll go to church every day, I'll do, just put me down on the ground." And about this time she did see a break in the clouds and she just dove straight through it. And right before her was this beautiful, grassy, stretch of grass, and she landed her AT-6 and was thanking, "Lord, thank you, Lord," and was immediately surrounded by little slanty-eyes. And she says, "Oh, my God, I've overshot the Pacific, I'm a one-woman invasion of Japan!" She'd landed on a Japanese internment camp parade ground. [risas] No, but I do want to talk about the deaths. We had thirty-eight deaths, and, that was equivalent to, I think, a little less than the men that had been doing these same jobs. And, our funny, funny status of being neither

fish nor fowl, when one of the girls were killed, the parents either had to send for the bodies or we girls would take up a collection and send the body home. There was no flag on the grave, there was no gold star to hang in the window, there was no 10,000 dollar insurance policies, we were just gone. And, the unfairness of it didn't bother us because we didn't know any better. We thought we were doing a great job, which we did, and we just went ahead and did it. Then, as I say, the fatalities were not as great as we thought we'd have and there was pilots were coming back. And they wanted their four hours a month, because that was flight pay. Well, we didn't get flight pay and we didn't get half of what they were paid, anyway, but they decided that they didn't need us anymore. So, December 22nd, we just got a letter a week before that, a very cold letter from the command headquarters saying, "As of December 22nd, the WASPs are disbanded." Well, we cried, we, but among ourselves, we didn't complain. You don't complain. We were all grateful we'd flown those gorgeous aircraft, anyway. And, uh, so we quietly paid - you have to pay your own way to go home, you know, there's no transportation, stuff. And, uh, that's one of the reasons why, thirty-five years later, when they took the first woman into the Air Force Academy after all the equal rights and so forth had happened, and the big publicity came up, we did get a little upset, and I think, justifiably so. Uh, I just keep talking here, you can go ahead, go ahead -

L.B: No, go ahead, I'm, uh, definitely interested, uh. You were talking about, uh, the, the instructors initially, some were very, you know, very against you, and--

A.B: Oh, there were others who was dolls, just dolls, yeah.

L.B: So, just a few, it depended on the instructor.

A.B: It depended on the individual. Yeah, but a lot of the bases, the girls were resented, uh, but, uh - some of 'em had some rough experiences - but the base I went to, Minkie and I, we were the first two women to go into the Second Flying Training Command, they'd had, they didn't have any women in the whole Second Training Command, and, uh, we were freaks to them, and I never had so many check rides in my life. Everyb-, officer of the field had to give us a check ride, see if we could fly, and do precision spins and bring it out on the money. And, uh, my husband was one of the instructors in the gunnery squadron I was assigned to, so I did get a beautiful, gorgeous man out of the war. [risas] And, uh, but, uh,

L.B: Where was, where was this, uh, training area, this Second Squadron at?

A.B: Well, it was Aloe Field, Victoria, Texas, and Foster Field; there were two fields there.

L.B: Okay.

A.B: And we had the, uh, fighter training, air-to-air combat training, and, uh -

L.B: You were the only two women stationed there?

A.B: Yeah. Some came in later as they graduated classes, came in -

L.B: Uh-huh. And what -

A.B: Some came in and never got assigned. The last two classes, well, the last class never got an assignment 'cause they were disbanded, and they just graduated, I think, all of them. But there were nine hundred and seventy-one of us that were on active duty as of December 22, 1944.

L.B: Okay. And your duties involved, uh, flying, transporting aircraft -

A.B: Transporting aircraft which I just -

L.B: -- to different bases?

A.B: Yeah, which I just -

L.B: When you would fly into some of these bases, were there women working in those bases, or were you -

A.B: No, most of the time, no. No, we were just transporting aircraft.

L.B: Okay.

A.B: And then, we were testing aircraft that had been - we lost a couple of girls that way, too - testing rebuilt aircraft, and, uh, ground-to-air combat. I can't think of all the - I have it all written out, but my memory, I have "Partsheimers," not Alzheimers, "Partsheimers," just part of the time, I don't remember things.

L.B: [risas] Okay.

A. B: But we had all the duties the men had in the continental United States.

L.B: Okay. Uh, is there any one aspect of it that you enjoyed more than the others?

A.B: Uh, I, well, flying the aircraft, to begin with, I'd give my, we could've bought after the war, Russ and I were laughing many times about the fact, I could have bought an AT-6, for two hund, beautiful condition, new, you know, for 250 dollars. But where, who had 250 dollars? No, none of us could. So we passed that up, now - it'd be worth 250,000 dollars now. Uh, I do have another funny story if you have time. You want me to?

L.B: Certainly.

A.B: All right. I told you about being selected to go to Orlando, Florida, for, uh, advanced tr-, officer training, that's when they were really gonna give us our, our commissions. And that was to decide who was going to be what rank. And I was sent there for, supposedly, a good

rank. And, uh, course we went by train, and they didn't fly us anywhere, and, uh, soldiers everywhere, on trains going, you know, across this country, and, uh, finally - they'll always say, "Oh, you're a flight nurse!" And we'd say, "No we're a woman pilot." "Oh, you're kidding." So finally, if they asked us, if we were flight nurses, we would say, "Yes, we are flight nurses." Because it was just not worth putting up [risas] with explanation. Anyway, finally got to Orlando, Florida, which was the glamour Base of the world. All the foreign allied, not foreign, allied forces had sent specialists there. Britain, Canada, Australia, the Free French, the Russians, every ally had all of their best people there to change ideas, and that's where they were really modernizing radar and all this stuff, hush-hush stuff, and, uh, I walked in the front door - I was the only one, by myself then, and there were other girls from all over the country there, and, uh, first person I met was Morgan Musser, and if anybody in Lake Charles doesn't know Morgan Musser there, he's been dead for years, too. The second person I met was Sue Lay Smith. And I said, "They're gonna go home and tattle on me, and I'm down here with all these gorgeous foreign officers, and I've gotta watch it because they're gonna go home to Lake Charles and tattle on me." And, uh, this British colonel, intelligence officer - little moustache, very cute little fellow - he said, "Oh, you're one of the WASPs." I said, "Yes. How'd you know?" "Well, we've heard about you from the women that we had over in England for a while, but they brought 'em back over here." And, uh, he said, "Come, let's have dinner." So he took me into the Officers Mess. And here were all of these officers, all down the row, in their different foreign uniforms, and I was so impressed, and they were so impressed with this girl. And, uh, down at the end of the table, all by herself, it was a long, long table, was this horrible, butchy-looking woman in Army greens, and looked like it had a bowl put over her head for a haircut, no makeup, and she was eating like this. Well, I felt adorable. And as the minutes went, went by, I got more adorable, and I, uh, talked, they wanted to know what I did, and I stretched the truth a little bit, and I was risking life and limb, you know, I mean, all the near-misses and all the, I ju-, I'm just lucky to be here alive, you know, this kind of story. And, uh, this British guy kept hitting me in the elbow, and I didn't say anything. And finally, the slob at the end of the table got up and left. And I asked him, I said, "Who in the world was that awful-looking woman down at the other end?" And he said, "That was Olga [whatever her name was, I have forgotten], the Russian fighter pilot that has seven German planes to her credit." And all I could think of to say was, "I hope she doesn't understand English."

L.B: [risas] Did you ever get to meet her later?

A.B: No, no, I never met her there. I met one that came to Shreveport. And, uh, one of the Night Witches, what books been written about them, and they flew the little crates, just to fly 'em across the line at night to keep the German soldiers awake. Little crates, nothing to 'em. They dropped flour sacks on 'em.

L.B: Uh, did the women that you were training with, and, and then you went on to serve with, did you have a special bond?

A.B: Oh, my heavens, we still have! I couldn't make this, I had the back operation, you know, broken back deal, and, but I was planning on going, I made a lot of all the rest of 'em, our sixtieth reunion - we get together every two years, those of us that are left, about two hundred left, I think - and, uh, we have a ball. Well, when we met for our fiftieth in, uh, Colorado Springs? No, fiftieth was in Sweetwater. One of them was in, at the Air Force Academy. We'd been to Washington, and we'd been to California, and we'd been to Florida. All of our reunions have been all over the country. And, uh, when we were in - well, what was I gonna say about - oh, reunions, yes, yes, yes. We were going up in the elevator in San Antonio, and they had had a big show of all the Army Air Force, uh, World War II planes that they had and brought in and the Confederate Air Force, now known as the Centennial Air Force, mustn't call 'em the Confederate Air Force any more, had brought in all their gorgeous planes. And they had a review for us and a big dinner, and they had a luncheon and then a big dinner, and, uh, we were going up in the elevator, and NBC had been covering some of it, and this one guy, reporter and cameraman were stuck in the elevator with us, and they said, "We have covered all of the ..." (what was the big to-do in the east, during the, well it's the young people gatherings, I forget the name of the thing) and he said, "They are noisy, and they were on drugs, and they were drinking, and they were doing this." But he says, "We have never been in a crowd that made as much noise or had as much fun as you old gals are having." And we do. We have a ball. Still in touch. I call and write and talk to a lot of my old friends. Minkie and I, Minkie has been here to Lake Charles to see me since I've been back here, and, uh, the girl that was with me in this, one of these pictures. And, uh, went with me down to Aloe. Uh, we are in constant touch.

L.B: Did having other women around help you get through the difficult training experiences, and?

A.B: Of course! Of course, of course. And cry on each other's shoulders and kiss those that washed out goodbye - and a lot of those that washed out come to the reunion, uh-huh, just to

see the old gals again.

L.B: Um

A.B: There are, like I said, a million different stories that are, that I can entertain young people. I love talking to young people. I've talked to the Kiwanis and I've talked to the DAR and all of this stuff, and church groups, and retirement homes, and so forth. But I like talking to schools. I like talking to young people. I went to Forest K. White, but the one I loved was at McNeese, here, and, I was talking to this history class, and telling all my funny stories, which are entertaining, and, uh, I like ending up, though, with saying, "I know you kids now have a rough time, the market's tight, and the jobs are scarce, and so forth," but I said, "remember, you have equal rights. You have sexual discrimination laws. You have racial discrimination laws. If you pinch my butt, I can sue you." And I said, "If you want to hear about discrimination, or learn about it, you talk to a Tuskegee airman, the black pilots, or you talk to a WASP, the women pilots, and we can tell you what discrimination was like, 'cause there were no laws, we had to claw our way in." And I said, "Now, everything seems -" And one little girl in front got up and she said, "Oh, Ms. Bulechek, I didn't know I had it this good." And I said, "You do. Whatever you decide you want to do, there's no law that says you can't do it. Go do it." And it's an inspirational thought for a lot of these kids to think they are of a generation in which they can do anything they make up their minds and their willpower to do. And that's the reason I love talking to young people. I could talk to 'em forever.

L.B: When you were in the WASP, did you feel that you were a groundbreaker? Did you understand the significance of what you were really doing?

A.B: Uh, after a fashion, I guess, but we were just busy doing our jobs. And, uh, there were, Minkie and I were alone for a while and then the other girls came in, later, right before we were disbanded, as a matter of fact, and, uh, I don't know that we knew we were groundbreaking, there wasn't, we didn't know that they could, you could get any above ground, you know, we just knew that we were gonna do what we wanted to do, and we did. We were completely unaware of the fact that there should be equality among the races, should be equality among the sexes. Uh, that's all way post-World War II.

L.B: Uh-hum.

A.B: But we knew we did the job. Well, Colonel, I mean, uh, General Hap Arnold, who I adored, had said that, uh, and it's on - my daughter bought me a big throw rug that come out, that's beautiful, has the WASP wings on it, and "Women Pilots, World War II", and then down

below it quotes, uh - I wish I had a big enough wall to hang it on, 'cause it's gorgeous - uh, General Arnold's tribute to us and I can't quote it 'cause my mind's not that good anymore, but it was that these are the women that proved they can fly wingtip to wingtip with any of their men pil-, copilots, men pilots and did a tremendous job well during World War II and deserve our respect, our admiration, and our love. And actually, Barry Goldwater, when he was talking to Congress, had said, actually, women did their jobs much better than the men who were doing them 'cause the men who were doing them thought they were dishwashing jobs and they wanted to get over and fight the enemy, you know, and said, the girls took their jobs seriously, and they would, they would fly at a certain altitude, at a certain airspeed, and make a turn at a certain degree at turn and come back, they did it. And, uh, when they were ferrying planes, they were very serious about getting there on time through any kind of weather, and, uh, so we're proud of the job we did, we're proud, and, and, uh, the men of the time were proud. They, they accepted us finally.

L.B: They finally accepted you?

A.B: I think so. I think so. Most places.

L.B: Most places they did?

A.B: Uh-hum.

L.B: Okay. Um, how were you, you know, when you got, you said, this very cold letter saying that, you know, the WASPs were going to be disbanded, you know, how did you feel?

A.B: Well, it wasn't a, a letter, a letter would have been nice, 'cause it might've ended "Thank you" or "Good luck." It was just Army orders.

L.B: Oh, okay.

A.B: Just plain old Army orders, coming out of Headquarters that we were disbanded as of December 22. Well, we were crushed, and completely taken aback. We hadn't realized how many men were coming back from overseas, had flown their routes and were coming back, but, uh, we were, we didn't know any better than to be good sports [laughs] if you want to know the truth about it. And we were grateful that we got to fly all the planes that we did fly.

L.B: Did you, I mean, did you all the way through assume that eventually it would end?

A.B: Uh, no, Jacqueline wanted to form, wanted us to go into the Air Force, be accepted into the Air Force then. Well, there was no way they were gonna let that happen. The WACs said they'd take us, but we'd have to do Army duty and, not fly, just go into the WACs and do Army duty. Well, we thought we'd done our job flying, and, insult and insult, all the airlines wrote us,

offering us jobs as stewardesses. Well, that we originally did a little.

L.B: But not as pilots.

A.B: No, not as pilots, none of 'em, nobody wanted us as pilots. Some of the girls did go in the WACs and, uh, not very many, not very many, uh-uh. The rest of us, a lot of 'em went back and, heck, opened their own airfields, and I went back after Russ and I were married and opened my own advertising agency here in Lake Charles. Um, and did some commercial flying after the war, and some instructing, at Cuero, while Russ was still in service. And, uh, matter of fact, I was instructing at this little field in Cuero, Texas, which was right above Aloe; we lived there and had, all the married officers had apartments up there. And, uh, I was giving lessons and doing some, carting people to San Antonio, Houston, or wherever they wanted to go, as a commercial pilot. And, uh, then they had a bone yard there, right above Cuero, where all of these planes were stacked up and discarded. It was a boneyard; matter of fact, the grass grew up between the wheels of the things. But the Mexicans wanted 'em, and we could earn 50 dollars a trip if we'd take 'em to the Mexican borders. The men - I was the only woman - these men, old men pilots, old, out of the war, too old to fly, they say. Uh, so I thought, "Well, that's a great idea. Russ is gone all day long, and I can make (I made two flights one time, one in the morning, one in the afternoon, then they'd have a cargo plane bring us back)." And, uh, you went around, you found one that started, and the great thing was, if it didn't, instruments didn't work, it didn't make any difference because all that was flat land, down from Cuero to the Mexican border, if you had to have an emergency landing, you could make one - wheels up or wheels down. And, uh, I was just having a great time until Russ checked our bank balance, and he said, "Where'd all the extra money coming from?" And I said, "Well, I've been taking a few of the planes from Cuero, that boneyard down the Mexican border while you've been, you know, at work." And, uh, he said, "Well, let's go see." So he went out and looked at 'em. He says, "No way. No way [laughs] you're putting your foot in one of those again." So that shortened my career of taking planes to the Mexican border for the, uh, [risas] Mexicans.

L.B: He didn't feel they were safe for you to fly?

A.B: No, no, no, no. They weren't. But that was all right. We didn't care. I didn't care. None of us did.

L.B: Uh -

A.B: 50 dollars, you'd do anything.

L.B: When did you, when did you get married?

A.B: We were married December 2, 1944 at Cuero Air Base, in the chapel, and my family came over and, uh, uh, I've got this all buttoned wrong, and, uh, my best friend Zita, who'd taken flying lessons with me, came over and was my maid of honor.

L.B: And you said your, your husband was a former instructor of yours?

A.B: No, he was in, he was an instructor for fighter pilots.

L.B: Okay.

A.B: In gunnery things.

L.B: Okay. And you'd met him -

A.B: We were turning out fighter pilots.

L.B: Okay. You met him on, on, in Sweetwater, on Base?

A.B: Yeah. In the gunnery squadron. These were all graduates, that had their wings, now, but they were learning, uh, air-to-air combat training before going overseas.

L.B: And he was instructing them.

A.B: And that's where I met Russ, uh-huh.

L.B: How did you meet him?

A.B In the gunnery squadron. And, uh, you had to get so much instrument training in every year, a month, under a hood, and he was one of those that would volunteer to go with me and, uh, you're under the hood and you're flying instruments. Well, instruments is a laugh, because, like I say, it was a needleball-airspeed, and keeping the wings level, and, uh, the only really modern thing we had was the beam, the radio beams, like from Dallas to Victoria, or from Oklahoma City to Witch-, to Dallas, or Oklahoma City to Wichita Falls, or Amarillo, Amarillo. And that was just a radio beam. And then you had earphones on, and there was a constant hum on these radio beams, so you'd go, what you did was, was, was called "bracketing the beams": you would go "dit, dot, dit, dot, dit, dot, dit, dot, dit, dot" and stay on the beam that way with a different noise, until you came across what was known as the "cone of silence." Well, when there was nothing there, you were over your airfield, and you let down, leisurely, and, uh - that was exciting at night, when you didn't know what you were doing, when you were training, and, uh, land your plane there. That was the, that was the most modern thing they had was the radio beam. And that's what you did in link trainer, we had, oh, gosh, we had two hundred and ten hours of flying time, but we had four hundred and some odd hours of ground training, and that included link trainers, which are the hooded things that

had the beams that we learned to fly the beam on, and calisthenics, oh, my gosh, engines. Engines I never did like. I memorized and made marvelous grades in engines, and then promptly forgot everything I knew, because I couldn't tell you what's under the hood of my car out there now. I always figured that if I was on the ground and there was something wrong, there was gonna be an A and E mechanic who would come and fix it for me. If I was up in the air, there was not a thing I could do about it except pray to God and bail out. So why did I have to know what was happening under there? I memorized it, I could tell you, I drew pictures, I could pass - great grades - and promptly forgot [laughs] it all. So we had all the same training the men did.

L.B: Okay. Did you have anything special that you did for good luck? You know, with all those flights, was there any routine or anything special that you -

A.B: No, no, I didn't have.

L.B: No good luck charm or anything?

A.B: No, no, I didn't have any good luck charms. I think most of us just had the will to succeed and the will to get those wings, that was the main thing you wanted. That was what you wanted.

L.B: Was the wings.

A.B: At any cost, yeah, uh-hum. But, uh, I've been just talking forever, but you said for me to talk.

L.B: Oh, that's, that's -

A.B: Then, after we, uh, daughter was born, Barbara Reiser, who lives here, and Barbara and Ed Reiser have been so good to us since we've come back. We came back here originally, and Russ worked for Murray Brooks, then he had, uh, Hollis and Company, an industrial supply company, and then he was moved to Shreveport as manager up there, and vice-president and manager, so we moved to Shreveport. And we were there for thirty-six years. And, uh, I started playing golf here in Lake Charles, when it was Kayouchee Coulee out here, was the only golf course and the country club. And played 'til I was eighty-one, then I had the back trouble, I don't think I'm gonna be able to play anymore, but if I could, I would, 'cause I love the competition. And, uh, I didn't, I opened my own agency when we, after Barbara Ann was born, and we moved back from California to, to, uh, Lake Charles. And I had all the good accounts. Then we moved to Lake, to Shreveport, and I became a golf bum. That's all I can say.

L.B: Became a golf bum.

A.B: Yeah.

L.B: Uh, how do you think your service affected the rest of your life?

A.B: Oh, in every way. In every way. 'Cause I still at eighty-three and I have back trouble, don't tell me I can't be the Grand Marshall, first woman Grand Marshall of the parade, Veterans Day Parade, because I'm supposed to sit up in the back of the red convertible, you know, well, the first comer they turned, I'd be in the street. So we built up pillows, and then this wheelchair I was in had about a seven-inch foam thing, and I sat in that. But the pictures are the funniest things you ever saw. All you can-, I had to wear my beret 'cause I was outdoors; ugliest things, those berets were ugly. And, all you can see is this pathetic little head, and these bent shoulders, and these arms trying to toss - I was just out of my back brace - and I'm throwing candy, Barbara Ann got me candy and bubble gum, and b-, I never did open the beads, I never got them open at all; I gave them to Kingsley Place, for their parade later. And, uh, I said, "I didn't make a blade of grass, I didn't make a piece of concrete, sidewalk, they all just went right down over the side, and I said, "I'm gonna kill thirty or forty little kids coming out to get the candy and bubble gum!" The men came, and then the women veterans - I had got a float for them - and got every woman veteran I could contact on the float. And, also got a granite memorial put up at the Civic Center honoring women veterans from all wars.

L.B: From all wars.

A.B: So, I said, "Don't tell me I can't do something 'cause I'll show you I can." It's just the will to just keep going and doing the best you can do, that's what I want to get to these kids.

L.B: Do you think you had that will, though, before you went into the service?

A.B: Yeah, yeah.

L.B: That's, that's what pushed you into the service?

A.B: Yeah, yeah. Well, you live through the Depression, now, kid, like I did, and a lot of old, us, my generation did, and you learn to survive. And, like I say, you went to work, you didn't have a chance ...

L.B: And you loved to fly.

A.B: Oh, and I loved to fly, yeah, I did.

L.B: Whatever got you interested in flying?

A.B: Oh, just watching 'em go, [laughs] watching 'em go out there at the little airport.

L.B: And you just wanted to do it?

A.B: Just wanted to do it. I had to get, get in that airplane, see if I could conquer that, and I did. Yeah, yeah.

L.B: Was it a, a different experience for you, being in a plane, than it would be, let's say, driving a car?

A.B: Oh, yes, heavenly. Now the funny thing is, I can't go to - trips, you know, or go up into a tall building and look over and look down the side of the building, I get sick. But cut me away from it, and get me in a plane, and I can look down and just admire everything. It's completely a different world, it isn't the world of height, it's the world of being cut off from the ground. You're soaring, you're an angel, you're flying around heaven. I, I'm probably making a little too much of, glamorizing a little too much of this, but, uh, at the time, it was very important to me.

L.B: Oh, I'm sure.

A.B: Yeah, yeah.

L.B: I'm sure. Uh, well, are there any other stories, specifically, that you can recall that you'd like to -

A.B: Oh, no, I think I've taken up enough of your time.

L.B: Oh.

A.B: I'm blabbing here for I don't know how long. It's been an hour, I know, [risas] I know.

L.B: That's okay, it's great to listen to you.

A.B: Well, I get so interested in trying - the few of us that are left are trying to get out the word that there were women pilots in World War II that nobody knows about. None of the kids you ask, you go into a big classroom or auditorium of kids, and say, "How many have heard of the WASP?" Well, maybe one will hold his hand up, but the rest of 'em have no idea, I mean, it's, uh, unknown. And then when you tell 'em you were a pilot in World War II, I was just horrified, though, to learn, somebody told me the other day, that high schools now have one hour on all of World War II.

L.B: Hm.

A.B: I hope it's not true.

L.B: I hadn't heard that.

A.B: I hope it's not true. But that's what I heard.

L.B: Certainly. Well, if you don't have anything to add, then we can, uh, close the interview, and thank you very much.

A.B: Close it now. You've been, you've been so helpful with your questions and your smile, and -

L.B: [risas] They, they don't want me to, to, I'm very used to, uh, you know, asking and interrupting, and verbally agreeing --

A.B: Verbally agreeing.

L.B: -- so it's very hard for me to get over that, and just shouldn't smile [risas] -

A.B: Smile and grin --

L.B: and nod my head -

A.B: Yes, yes, yes.

L.B: -- but, uh, no, personally, I think I have the best job in the world, 'cause I get to listen to all of these stories.

A.B: All of these stories.

L.B: Oh, and I love to.

A.B: Have you, have you, uh, uh, interviewed - I don't know whether Jesse Knowles is in shape, he's on dialysis now.

L.B: Actually, I think we're trying to get an interview with him at home.

A.B: At home, yeah. Uh-huh.

L.B: Yeah, we're trying to get an interview with him at home. Um, it's tentatively set, I think.

A.B: And they gave the Distinguished Flying Cross, now, to - what was his name? - Ed - check and be sure through Joe Hill, who's head of the, uh, -- I'm on the mayor's Armed Forces Committee.

L.B: Okay.

A.B: And Captain Hill is a Navy captain who's in charge of it, and they gave the Distinguished Flying Cross to this friend of my - I hope we're not on camera now.

L.B: [risas] It's gonna be rolling, but I'm sure they've shut off on that side, so -

A.B: Uh, Distinguished Flying Cross to him, like, uh, sixty years late, you know, he was shot down over Germany in World War II, and the -

L.B: What did you think his name was? Ed? First name is Ed?

Transcripción no. 15
Dorothy Jeannette Mobley
Civil-Remachadora

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.00825/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Mayo 17, 2002

Duración: 20 min.

Nombre: Dorothy Jeannette Gray Mobley

Lugar de nacimiento: Wyoming, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Wyoming, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Sin especificar

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Fecha de servicio: 1942-1944

Ubicación de servicio: Casper, Wyoming

Prisionera de guerra: Sin especificar

Entrevistador: Tony Regan

Entrevistadora: Stephanie Wood

Colaboradora: Sandra Bullock

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: Moorcroft High School

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/825

Sujetos:

Mobley, Dorothy Jeannette

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

Citado como:

Dorothy Jeannette Mobley Collection

(AFC/2001/001/825), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistador Tony Regan: It is May 17, 2002, we are at the Moorcroft Junior/Senior High School. We're interviewing Dorothy Mobley and Tony Regan and Stephanie Ward are going to be interviewing. And what type of work did you do when you were in the Army or Navy?

Dorothy Jeannette Mobley: I suppose it is wartime service. Well, I was a general mechanic

helper.

T.R: Okay, we will start the interview. We need to know your name.

D.J.M: Dorothy J. Mobley.

T.R: What was your maiden name?

D.J.M: Dorothy Gray.

T.R: And how old are you?

D.J.M: 77.

T.R: Where were you born and raised?

D.J.M: I was born about eight miles from Warcroft.

T.R: Okay, what was your family background?

D.J.M: I had two brothers; both of them were in the service, in the Navy.

T.R: Okay, What's your educational background?

D.J.M: I graduated from Rosette, Wyoming, the 12th grade, in 1942.

T.R: What's your current occupation?

D.J.M: Domestic engineer.

T.R: And your current address?

D.J.M: 400 North [no claro].

T.R: At the time of the War, were you in a relationship, married, or single?

D. J. M: I was single when it started.

T.R: Okay, what's your spouse's name and wartime occupation?

D.J.M: Jack Mobley. He was in the Service, Air Corps, Army encampment, Casper. That soldier uniform turns ya on.

T.R: If married, when and where were you married? You're married, but where were you married?

D.J.M: Oh, we were married in Gillette, Wyoming.

T.R: Okay, did you have any children at any time during the War?

D.J.M: Well, my oldest one was born during the War, after Jack had gone overseas. He was born the day he landed in Italy.

T.R: Where did you live or work during the War?

D. J. M: In Casper, Wyoming.

T.R: You worked as a mechanical --

D.J.M: As Rosie the Riveter.

T.R: What was your main wartime activity?

D.J.M: Repairing the airplanes, I guess.

T.R: Why did you choose that activity?

D.J.M: Well, this is when so many of the boys had gone to Service so they were going to train the women to be able take over the wartime activity, so they started a pilot program in Casper and they're all graduates.

T.R: What kind of training were you given?

D.J.M: I was a sheet metal worker. We went to the school that had welding and they had, what was it? Welding and sheet metal and a shop where you done metal work. Different activities. You could take either one you wanted to but this seemed like [no claro].

T.R: So did you learn how to weld?

D.J.M: No, I didn't. I didn't choose that department. I just -

T.R: What was your title?

D.J.M: What was my title? I guess I was a general mechanic helper.

T.R: What did you like and dislike about being a general mechanical worker.

D.J.M.: I liked it because it was probably my first paycheck and I thought that was great, getting \$125 a month.

T.R: What did you dislike about it?

D.J.M: Nothing really.

T.R: What special roles or conventions did you have to follow?

D.J.M: None really. We were well supervised so we done what they said to do.

T.R: Who did you work for?

D.J.M: Well, it was -- it would have been --it was at the Casper Air Base and I suppose that's what they'd say, the Army Airforce at the Sub Depot.

T.R: Were you un-I-onized?

D.J.M: You mean unionized?

T.R: Yes.

D.J.M: No we weren't in a union; you didn't have to belong to a union.

T.R: Okay, did you develop friendships during the training or the activity itself?

D.J.M: Oh yes, I had a lot of friends; I used to keep in contact with all of them, but kind of lost contact with a lot of them now. A lot of them passed away.

T.R: How did you feel about the War?

D.J.M: Well, I was too young to really think too much. I was just going with the flow then.

T.R: How do you feel about it now?

D.J.M: Well, I think it was something that had to be done. I think we done our job.

T.R: And what ways did the war change your activities or habits?

D.J.M: What days?

T.R: What ways did the war change your activities or habits?

D.J.M: Changed my life. I got married, went to North Carolina, had three boys; that really changed it.

T.R: Sounds like it. What were some of the first changes in your life after the war started?

D.J.M: What were some of the first changes? Well, I learned to be a housewife.

T.R: What different responsibilities did you have to take on?

D.J.M: With this?

T.R: Yes.

D.J.M: Well, what was the responsibilities we had to take on. Well, we had to just learn how to do these things and then after we'd had six weeks of training at the CNYA school and then we had to work at the air base.; we had to be there just like a job, you know. You were picked up, you went to work, you worked eight hours and then you went home. And it was shift work. You worked one of the three shifts.

T.R: What time did usually work start for you?

D.J.M: Well, you worked eight to four, then from four to midnight, then midnight to eight.

T.R: How did you entertain yourself outside of work?

D.J.M: Well, we had picture shows - that's about all -- the main entertainment there, and then [no claro]. About twice a month we had this counselor ,I guess you'd call her. Anyway, we'd have to entertain the soldiers at the USO.

T.R: Did you worry whether our side would win, the United States?

D.J.M: I don't think I was worried too much about it then.

T.R: Did you know anyone who was killed or wounded in the war?

D.J.M: Well, one of the boys we went to school with and took this training with, he got killed. That's about it. That's about all I know that got killed. That was shortly after he went overseas he got killed. He was in the Navy.

T.R: What effect did the war have on your physical or mental health?

D.J.M: None really; just got a husband.

T.R: Do you think that medical care changed because of the war?, medical care?

D.J.M: Uhhum. I really don't know whether I think it did or not. I suppose it did because of a lot of the war-related accidents and things.

T.R: Was it Red Cross?

D.J.M: Red Cross was really active during that time. In fact, my husband was going overseas when our baby was born, so we let the Red Cross know and then they let him know.

T.R: Did you have worthwhile experiences because of the war?

D.J.M: What?

T.R: Did you have worthwhile experiences because of the war?

D.J.M.: A lot of letters I wrote every day.

T.R: What was your most memorable experience?

D.J.M: With?

T.R: Anytime during those --

D.J.M: During those times, during that -- most memorable experience. Well, I guess I could always remember, because I was smaller than most of the girls there, I always had to get up in the airplane wings -- they had what they call the bucking bar -- put these rivets in and put it up -- they would go up there and the rivet girl would go up there, rivet it up, put the gun on it and shoot it and then you'd have to sit on this side of the bucking bar and flatten it out to hold it, keep the metal on that you put on it.

T.R: So you'd have to climb inside the wing?

D.J.M: Uh hum. You know, with all these cross members and things around in there, you had to get up in there; if there's a hole in it you'd have to repair it.

T.R: What kind of planes did you work on?

D.J.M: B24s, B17s.

T.R: Have you visited any memorials or participated in any com-memor-? I can't say that word.

D.J.M: Commemorations?

T.R: Yeah.

D.J.M: Uh, no, we went to the 50th anniversary of the Casper Airbase, but that's where I worked but it was for the soldiers more but we got to go see where I worked and --

T.R: Was there a lack of social opportunities and friends because of the war?

D.J.M: No, I don't think there was.

T.R: How did your community respond to the war and some of the differences?

D.J.M: Our community was really active with publishing the papers and sending it to all these soldiers and letter writing. Of course I was gone most of the time then; I went to North Carolina and stayed there until he came back from overseas, at his home. Well, I came back here then after Jackie was six months old,.

T.R: How did you cope with the wartime shortages?

D.J.M: Well, we had a stamp for shoes, you had a little stamp for sugar and you got by; you didn't have about six pair of shoes and --

T.R: The way it is now?

D.J.M: Yeah, and you didn't -- you were real sure that you didn't had to use the sugar before you used it, you know. You didn't do a lot of cooking with desserts and things.

T.R: What about recycling, like rubber, grease or other commodities? How did you guys recycle?

D.J.M: Oh, during the war?

T.R: Yeah.

D.J.M: I don't remember recycling. I know we collected a lot of iron, anytime you needed iron, we'd have iron drives.

T.R: How do you feel about war news from newsreels or radio?

D.J.M: Now?

T.R: Now and then?

D.J.M: Well, I think we are pretty interested in it; you always look to see because anywhere where you were, had any relatives or something, you were kind of interested in what is doing.

T.R: Do you remember when the war ended?

D.J.M: Yes, I remember when the war ended.

T.R: How did you feel?

D.J.M: I was grateful.

T.R: What's your most memorable time when the war ended? What do you remember most?

D.J.M: Well, I just knew that Jack was stationed in South Carolina there; I just knew he would get to come home. So that was, you know.

T.R: You must have been very excited? How would you describe the ways the war changed yours and the others' lives?

D.J.M: How would I explain it? It made a change; things were much different after World War

ll than they were before. I don't know how but just offhand I can't think of --

T.R: Did you keep your job or continue working after the war was over?

D.J.M: With this job, no. When Jack got home, so -- I only worked there a little over a year, just worked at the airbase a little over a year.

T.R: And you said you got paid a hundred and twenty --

D.J.M: Yeah, a hundred and twenty-five dollars when I started and then I got a raise, and I was getting, I think it was a hundred and thirty-five dollars.

T.R: Was that a lot of money back then?

D.J.M: Boy that was a lot of money!. Of course, you could only buy one pair of shoes, you know, every six months or something, so.

T.R: I would die. (risas)

D.J.M: Clothes, we always had a lot of clothes, we thought. But they didn't cost too much then. We lived right close to kind of an outlet store, I guess you'd call it now, so we did a lot of shopping there.

T.R: Is there one thought about your wartime experience that you'd like to share with the future generations?

D.J.M: Well, I didn't have much wartime experiences

T.R: Or any experiences?

D.J.M: Well, things are so much different than when they were doing that that, I don't know how to explain to anybody how to do things now. Just take advantage of it.

T.R: Okay, Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

D.J.M: Not that I know of.

T.R: Thank you for your time. I think we can stop this now.

Transcripción no. 16

Irene Robertson

Civil-Remachadora

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.20423/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Enero 27, 2004

Duración: 23 min.

Nombre: Irene B. Norton Robertson

Lugar de nacimiento: West Virginia, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Willoughby, Ohio, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Blanca

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Civil

Ubicación de servicio: Cleveland, Ohio

Prisionera de guerra: No

Entrevistador: Thomas Swope

Transcriptora: Annie L. Barrus

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: Legacies: Stories from Second World War

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/20423

Sujetos:

Robertson, Irene B.

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

Citado como:

Irene B. Robertson Collection

(AFC/2001/001/20423), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Transcripción

Entrevistador Thomas Swope: This is the World War II oral history of Irene Robertson. Her maiden name was Norton. She was a factory worker at a defense-related plant on the home front. I'm Tom Swope, and this interview was recorded at Mrs. Robertson's home in Willoughby, Ohio on January 27th, 2004. Irene was 80 at the time of this recording. Where were you living in 1941?

Irene Robertson: West Virginia. Wheeling, West Virginia. And when the war started, we came to Cleveland.

T.S: How old were you then, in '41?

I.R: Eighteen or nineteen.

T.S: Were you out of school?

I.R: Yes. Yes.

T.S: Uh-huh. So then you moved to Cleveland shortly after? Do you -- Well, first of all, before we get to that, do you have specific memories of December 7th, 1941?

I.R: Yes, because I had a lot of friends in Hawaii at the time.

T.S: Uh-huh. What do you remember about that day, about hearing the news?

I.R: Just that there was the bombing, and they lost a lot of boats and things, and that my friends were over there. And that's all I remember, really.

T.S: Did you end up losing any friends over there?

I.R: No. Not really. No. They all came back.

T.S: That's good. What was your personal reaction when you heard the war had started for us? How did you feel -- how did you feel about it when the war began?

I.R: Well, I think they had plenty warning, but they just didn't pay attention to it.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: Like always.

T.S: So how soon after that did you move up North?

I.R: Came in '43. Mother's Day of forty -- in May of '43.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And then we went to -- got a job at General Motors, building the B-29s. They sent us to a college used to be in Cleveland on Thirtieth Street, Fenn College. They sent us there for training, and then we went to work.

T.S: Uh-huh. Is that why you moved up here?

I.R: To get a job, yeah.

T.S: For work? Uh-huh.

I.R: Because there was nothing down there.

T.S: Uh-huh. Now, before, in the year or so before you took that job, what do you remember about life on the home front, as far as rationing and that sort of thing?... Life on the home front, rationing, gas rationing, and that sort of thing.

I.R: Oh, we saved all our gas rationing and give it to the man that used to take us to work. And I remember the meat, which didn't bother us, and that. So we sort of shared it with people who didn't have it. Because there was five of us came together.

T.S: Uh-huh. Not much of a hardship for you, though?

I.R: No. No.

T.S: Not really?

I.R: Huh-uh. No. We didn't drive, and we give our driver the gas coupons, you know.

T.S: Uh-huh. Now, when you took this job at General Motors, did you want to get involved in something that was defense related?

I.R: Yes.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: Uh-huh.

T.S: Well, tell me about that job, then.

I.R: Well, they sent us for training, and then when we came back to Coit Road Plant we built the nacelles for the B-29. And after we built them there, we sent them to -- they went to the -- it's the I-X Center now -- the bomber plant on the West Side. I think it's the I-X Center, or somewhere over there. And then they sent them to Wichita Falls. And we worked on those. We riveted, we countersunk, we put it together. And then they were having trouble with the supercharger at the time, and myself and another guy went around and recorrected the problem. Other than that, I, you know... I mean, we worked pretty hard. But we enjoyed every minute of it.

T.S: Were there a lot of women working there?

I.R: Mostly.

T.S: Mostly --

I.R: Mostly women. They brought a lot of women from down South up here, and they brought

a lot of black people from down South up, and taught them how to work, and really did a good job. And all the bosses were people who couldn't get in the service, that had high blood pressure or whatever, couldn't get in, and they were the bosses. And we worked up until the day they signed the -- 1945, in the summer. I think it was July we got all laid off; they closed it down.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: But I showed you the...

T.S: Right. They gave you a -- they gave you a nice little B-29; right?

I.R: Yes.

T.S: A little -- little model of a B-29?

I.R: Yeah. There was 15 of them made at the time.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: I was lucky to get one of them.

T.S: How did they decide who got one?

I.R: (risas) I guess their pets. I don't know how they decided. But I know that when they said -- my boss said, "They built a B-29 to 100 percent scale, but I can't show it to you; we're putting it in a safe, and when the war's over, I'll give it to you." And that's what happened. And it's supposed to be 100 percent scale. And they didn't have them out at the time that they came in. They were made in casting them, cast iron.

T.S: So for security reasons they couldn't let those models go out to the public; right?

I.R: I don't know.

T.S: But yeah, obviously. Did they have this -- did you -- did they make the model before the B-29s were actually flying? Uh-huh?

I.R: Uh-huh. You know, the engineer made it from scale. And he said it was 100 percent scale model. And I always did -- whatever they wanted, I would do, you know? And so my boss liked me pretty well, that -- you know, that he looked after me, too, you know.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And so they gave it to us the day the atomic bomb -- they dropped the atomic bomb. That's what they gave us.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And my husband was a navigator on the B-29, so I gave it to him, when he -- when we got married. I gave it to him, and then after he passed away, then I still have it now.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: There was 15 of us that got them.

T.S: What did you think when you realized one of those planes dropped the bomb?

I.R: Well, we were very happy with those planes. We took very -- I -- we took real cautious -- we were cautious how we made, make sure we didn't make mistakes, and very careful about everything.

T.S: Uh-huh. Did you know what kind of plane you were working on?

I.R: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

T.S: You knew it was a --

I.R: We didn't know about the atomic bomb, but we knew it was a very special plane, and that they didn't want nobody to know anything about it. We weren't allowed to talk about it. We weren't allowed to say anything to anybody. But it -- but from what my boss told me, it was really, really special. And then after we went over and saw one of them completed, we knew how special they were.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: Because they had one on the West Side, completed, after, you know, the war was over.

T.S: Right. What did you think when you saw one of those B-29s? Great plane?

Irene Robertson: They were -- they were -- well, I think -- isn't that the biggest plane they made?

T.S: Certainly during World War II I think it was the biggest bomber they had.

I.R: Yeah.

T.S: Yeah.

I.R: And they had all those different turrets in different places, and...

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And my husband said it was really -- his -- his crew was in the CBI area, in the same place where they had dropped the atomic bomb.

T.S: Right.

I.R: They were out of -- they flew out of there. But, you know, I wasn't there, but I -- we tried to work hard. We never missed work or anything. We worked every day at it. And I really enjoyed every minute. I worked, enjoyed every minute, working for General Motors, all along. So...

T.S: Did you have a lot of -- go through a lot of security clearance before you could work

there?

I.R: No. You had to have your -- they have your fingerprint in Washington. They had your blood -- birth certificate. And they make a badge, and you had to carry your badge with you at all times. But other than that, I don't know that there was any real security.

T.S: Uh-huh. Was there any -- ever any trouble at the plant with anybody talking too much, or anything like that?

I.R No. Huh-uh. No, nobody did talk. They were all -- everybody was happy with their work.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: I never heard any complaining or anything. You know, they were all interested in it. And I mean, it was a huge plant. You know where Coit Road is, how big that is.

T.S: Sure. Yeah.

I.R: Uh-huh.

T.S: But they made it clear they didn't want you going home and talking about what you were -
-

I.R: No, we were --

T.S: -- doing?

I.R: -- told not to talk to anybody, or not to say anything.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: Don't even say what you're doing. I just said we work in an aircraft factory. That's it. We didn't say nothing. As far as I know, with my group, where there was five of us that came here together, and we all worked here. And so I don't -- we had no problems, you know.

T.S: Do you think that was the first job for most of those women?

I.R: Biggest part of them, yeah -- well, not the first job, but first real... Like they worked in dime stores. That's where we all worked, us four -- five girls; in dime stores, or -- or in baby-sitting. Stuff like that.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And a lot of the girls they brought up from the South, it definitely was their first job. And I think we made about a dollar fifty-two cents an hour, at the start. But that was a lot of money. We used to make -- at the dime store we made -- what was it? -- for 48 hours, about 20 dollars. So...

T.S: Do you think a lot of women kept working after -- or tried to get another job after they were laid off? Uh-huh?

I.R: All the ones that I knew did. And I've kept working since. I mean, I just quit not too long ago.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And I -- I mean, really, I enjoyed that job. I kept going back, when they called me back, even in the automobile industry. Till 60, I worked. And then my husband made me quit, because it was getting too rough in Cleveland.

T.S: Do you think any of the men resented having women work there?

I.R: No. No. Huh-uh. No, they always treated them -- they always treat us with respect, and nice. Never had any problems. And there wasn't too many men there. There was a few, but not a whole lot. More older men, you know, than young men. But...

T.S: Did you follow war news closely when you were -- during the war? Did you follow the news of the war closely?

I.R: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh. Because I had a brother there at the time, too.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And you had to watch it very close. And we were very glad it was over. We celebrated for a whole day. Just as soon as they left us off, we all -- all went out and celebrated, you know, that it was over.

T.S: Uh-huh. Where did you go? Downtown Cleveland?

I.R: No. We lived ninety -- 93rd and Euclid, and we went -- well, we stayed in our neighborhood. And it was such a beautiful neighborhood at the time.

T.S: Your brother was in the Pacific?

I.R: Yeah. He was in the Navy. He was down on Iwo Jima.

T.S: Really?

I.R: And he come back okay; he was all right. Fact, he's still okay. He still lives in West Virginia.

T.S: Did you write to him a lot?

I.R: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

T.S: What kinds of things would you write?

I.R: Oh, just about what's going on, telling him that we were in -- up here, because that's the first -- none of the rest of the kids ever left home, and I was the first one to leave home. Telling him how good we were doing. And he came to visit just as soon as he got out of the service. I never went back home after that. I mean, to live. I liked it up here too well.

T.S: Now, did you move up here with your husband?

I.R: No, I wasn't married --

T.S: You weren't --

I.R: -- at the time.

T.S: -- married at the time. You moved up alone?

I.R: Uh-huh. Well, no; five girls.

T.S: Oh, five girls...

I.R: Five girls that hung out together in school and that.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And we all came here. We lived together coming up until -- one of them was already married. Her husband was in the service. And the other four weren't. And as they got married and left, I was the one that stayed. And then I got married, and... Still here.

T.S: Do you remember hearing the news about the landings on D-Day?

I.R: Yes. Yes.

T.S: What was it like at the plant that day?

I.R: It seemed when big things happened, everybody was quiet, and didn't say much, you know. But there wasn't too much -- like the radios and stuff, they didn't have no news in the shop. You'd just hear it from word of mouth. You know. But we never had -- they never played music or anything. We were too busy with whatever. Or you couldn't hear. But once you got a -- when you worked in those nacelles, once you got inside -- like one worked on the outside with the rivet gun; the other worked on the inside with the bucking bar, they called it. You know. And to go down, you couldn't hear nothing anyhow, you know, with all the noise. But it was very interesting, I'll tell you. I worked in several departments, and wound up, like I said, the supercharger locknuts were breaking or something, and so one guy and I was taught how to fix them. And we used to go around and crawl in them nacelles and fix them superchargers. And we got them right, so...

T.S: What were some of the other jobs you had at the plant?

I.R: I worked at rework, where -- where there something was wrong, we -- I redid it. I worked in -- in the nacelles on the inside, with the riveting and that. And the electrical work and that was all done outside the plant, when they took the nacelles. We just made the, basically, shell of the nacelle. That's all we did. And then they took it and put the electrical part in, other places. But all we had was that big, round nacelle to work on. And it was on a line, and they

pushed it. Once they got it so far, they put it on wheels and pushed it. Otherwise it hung from the ceiling, and they pushed it now and then. It was assembly.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: Everybody had their job to do, and when they come there, they did it. I mean, it's just like -- the automobile industry is the same thing.

T.S: Thinking back to the early days of the war, did you ever have any doubt, that we might not win?

I.R: Never ever had any doubts. I never had any doubts that we would ever lose, up until this year. This is the only time I have doubt. I've lost all confidence in our political society.

T.S: Uh-huh. Is this because of Iraq?

I.R: No, because they're -- they're so -- because they're so egotistical that they -- you can't tell them nothing. I mean, they told them. And I mean, I remember, with Castro, and I remember some of these big things. But you can't tell them anything. That's why I write letters constantly. I'm on their case all the time. And it's sad. It's sad. Because they don't have to do things that they do. But what are you going to do?

T.S: Who do you write? Congressmen, senators, that sort of thing?

I.R: LaTourette.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: I got some things in there now. DeWine. Used to be Metzenbaum. In fact, I had an advocacy group up at Browning for quite a while. And we had Metzenbaum's secretary. John Glenn's secretary knew my voice. I was on her over the notch baby stuff.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And in fact, I just sent somebody in Washington a copy of the letter John Glenn gave us. He sent me a letter saying when some of the old people die off -- which he's our age, too -- they'll get that notch money.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And so I sent that off to somebody in Washington the other day. Because they keep sending, asking for money. And I tell them, "Forget it; you're not getting it." And I sent that letter back.

T.S: Have you ever heard back from any of these people, other than John Glenn?

I.R: Oh, I hear back from most all of them. Yeah. They usually write. In fact, I got a letter the other day from DeWine. And that was about pro abortion, which --

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: -- I think you're -- you should be able to do what you want with your own body.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And no, I get involved, and I get carried away. And I keep them -- they close the pool hall -
-

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: -- at Browning when I start, because those guys are all ____ guys.

T.S: Were you fairly active politically back during the war, during the war years?

I.R: Huh-uh.

T.S: No?

I.R: A little bit -- little bit when -- after I was married and moved to Willowick, I was a little active. I was trying to keep it like country, and I took on (?for city?), and they wanted to bring Uncle Bill's at Willowick. Do you remember that?

T.S: I do.

I.R: Shoregate?

T.S: Yes.

I.R: Well, I fought that. And when they came -- when they came to build that store, it was going to go on, I think it's 289.

T.S: Yeah.

Irene Robertson: The dock was going to face 289, and I said no. He said, "What do you know?" I said, "No. You can't have it that way. You have to turn it around and go that way with it." So they -- we fought about three weeks, and finally they turned it around. But he said, "What do you know?" I said, "I got a diploma, and blueprint, I can read blueprints." "Oh, no, no." I said, "Don't tell me it's not, because you know [no claro]."

T.S: Yeah.

I.R: And they turned it around. And so after that, I -- after -- my husband kept saying, "Please. We're going to get sued." So I dropped out. They wanted me to run for councilman, and I said no, because he said no. But I've always been -- what's going on, I try to get, you know, straightened out. And then they wanted street lights in Willowick; I didn't want street lights. So where did they put one? Right on the corner of my driveway. So I was after that one, too. But, you know, if something don't -- bothers me, I -- I holler.

T.S: Did you like FDR?

I.R: Yes. I even thought -- what's his name?

T.S: Truman?

I.R: No. Oh, I liked Truman; I liked FDR. But I don't think that Nixon was that bad. It's just that somebody -- they did something wrong. But I thought, as far as being a president, I thought he had it together.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And I'm not -- I'm not a Republican. I'm not really - can't -- I'm registered Democrat, but you can't really say, because I vote for LaTourette, and I vote for a few Republicans, but they have to be that -- you know. But I don't know. What can you do?

T.S: Yeah. Do you remember the day FDR died?

I.R: Yes. Yes. I remember the day Kennedy died, too.

T.S: Oh, right. Sure.

I.R: I was working in a drugstore, and I took a walk, and I -- Western Auto was there, and they had a TV in the window. My daughter got -- her picture was published in the News Herald when... When he -- she -- Jackie took her ring off and put it in his hand, she drew that picture for -- in government class, and it was published in the News Herald. So... No, I -- I -- I don't think -- I don't think a lot of things are right, but what can you do?

T.S: Was there a lot of sadness in the plant when they heard about FDR dying?

I.R: Oh, yes.

T.S: Yeah.

I.R: Everybody was -- I mean, still we talk about it. It still don't seem right.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: You know? He was a good man. So was Truman a good man. But -- and I liked Clinton. Except for his problems. But after all, he's not alone.

T.S: That's right.

I.R: There's a lot of other ones there that's just as -- worse than him.

T.S: When you think back to the war years, is there a vivid memory that comes to mind, one particularly vivid memory?

I.R: Mostly when I -- when they bombed Pearl Harbor. That I remember more than anything. And we never did too much reading in the papers and that, you know, when we were younger. But I remember that because, like I said, a lot of my friends had just gone over there; wasn't over there for long.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And they were all in the Navy at the time, and... In fact, I had some of those e-mails or whatever.

T.S: V-mail; right?

I.R: V-mail. Yeah. And I let Dr. Cullochier (ph) have them. In fact, he had wanted all that stuff I had, but I didn't give it to him.

T.S: Where -- where is he from?

I.R: He's here in Willoughby.

T.S: Oh, is he a historian?

I.R: No, he's retired.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: He still comes around, but he's retired. And he --

T.S: Just collects stuff, huh?

I.R: And there was a guy on the West Side that talked me out of those other things that I was telling you I had.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: But...

T.S: Now, what were some of the other things that you -- you gave that other guy?

I.R: Huh?

T.S: What did you give that other guy again?

I.R: Well, we had a frame with all my husband's ribbons and medals.

T.S: Oh, right. Okay.

I.R: And nobody wanted them, and he said he was going to have them on display.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And I think he was -- you know, I don't know. Anyhow, I had the map of the CBI area, on both sides.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: And the B-29 he had looked at, but I wouldn't let him have that. Oh, and like a yearbook of my husband's time in the service.

T.S: Uh-huh.

I.R: It was just like your high school yearbook --

T.S: Right.

I.R: -- and had all of that in there. And he said that the Army would like it, and he would... You know, just like I said I was going to go to the museum and give them that plane, and then I changed my mind. Because after he took the stuff, I never heard from him again. You know. And so I don't know whatever happened to it. Probably made some money on it.

T.S: Possibly. I don't know.

I.R: So I don't know.

T.S: Anything else?

I.R: Nothing that I can think of.

T.S: Think that covers it?

I.R: That's about it.

T.S: All right.

Transcripción No. 17

Violet Gordon

WAAC/WAC

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.00146/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Marzo 25, 2002

Duración: No especificado

Nombre: Violet Hill Askins Gordon

Lugar de nacimiento: Oakland, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Florida, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Afroamericana

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fecha de servicio: 1942-1946

Entrada en el servicio: Comisionada

Rama de servicio: WAC (Women's Army Corps)

Unidad de servicio: Compañía 32; Batallón 6888

Ubicación de servicio: Fort Des Moines, Iowa; Fort Huachuca, Arizona; Inglaterra; Francia; Frente europeo.

Rango mayor: Capitán

Prisionera de guerra: No

Nota: La veterana fue la 2da oficial al mando en la Compañía 32 (una compañía racialmente segregada). Se enlistó en la WAAC (Women's Army Auxiliary Corps). El batallón 6888 fue la única unidad enteramente afroamericana de mujeres que sirvió en el extranjero durante la SGM.

Entrevistadora: Judith Kent

Colaboradora: Judith Kent

Transcriptora: Barbara W. Hightcap

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: Flagler County Public Library

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United States. WAC (Women's Army Corps).

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Transcripción

Entrevistadora Judith Kent: Today is March 25, the year 2002. This interview is being conducted in Palm Coast, Florida in the private home of Mrs. Violet Hill Gordon, the veteran who will be interviewed. The interviewer, Judith Kent, is present representing the Flagler County Public Library where both she and Mrs. Gordon are volunteers and trustees. Testing, testing. Mrs. Gordon, would you state for the record what branch of the service you served in?

Violet Gordon: I served in the Women's Army Corps, which originally was the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps.

J.K: In what war did you serve?

V.G: World War II.

J.K: And your rank?

V.G: I was discharged as a Captain. I entered the training for the Officer Candidate class, the first one for women. That meant that I began as an enlisted person for training. At the end of the training period, which was, I believe six weeks; I earned the rank of what was then called, "The Second Commanding Officer".

J.K: Where did you serve during your enlistment?

V.G: My Officer Candidate Training took place in Fort Des Moines, Iowa. At the completion of that I was assigned to Fort. Huachuca, Arizona where the first detachment of Black women were sent. There I served as the Second Commanding Officer. In other words, I was the Executive Officer. I served in that capacity until I was transferred to, until I moved with a detachment to Fort Lewis, Washington.

J.K: And from there?

V.G: I served there until I received orders to report, I believe to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia for an overseas assignment. That involved assignment to, well it involved going overseas to the European Theater where I served as an officer in the 6888th Postal Battalion. That was my assignment until I was discharged.

J.K: Let's go back now to 1942 and your enlistment. Where were you living at that time?

V.G: In Chicago, Illinois.

J.K: Why did you join?

V.G: Well, I joined because my best friend, Mildred Osby, appeared at my house one day, all excited because she had either received information or had learned that there was going to be organized an officer, there was going to be organized really a Women's Army Corps. She wanted very much to be part of it; and, as we were very close friends she thought it would be wonderful if I also was interested and would do so. At that time I was working in State Civil Service; I was supervising a stenographic pool. I was not bored, but restless?, kind of stuck, I guess. But I wasn't that excited about entering into anything that sounded as regimented as the Army. So I didn't pick up on it initially. She kept after me and after me and I finally said, 'Well, Ok.' That Ok involved filling out a detailed application, and then taking a series of examinations which included physical, aptitude tests, psychological tests. I think those were the three broad categories. One's selection?, you had to pass those steps before you went for the final step, which was the interview. Those steps determined whether or not you were considered material for Officer Candidate Training. Of course there was a lot of, this was such a bold step in a way. One has to remember that at that time the Army was segregated and number two there were nurses but there were no enlisted or women officers as an official part of the Army. Of course, this would not be officially a part of the Army; it would be an Auxiliary branch of the Army. There were pros and cons, but eventually I did give in and apply. Then having applied I was sure that I would never pass all of this business. At that time I had completed two years of college. They were looking for, their goal was forty Negro women who would then form the officer corps that would train the subsequent enlisted women who came into the service. Their standards, their expectations and their hopes were high. They wanted forty professional women. I think that the minimum age was eighteen, and of course they preferred women who had not only the education background but also some maturity and work experience, which would be an asset in embarking on an endeavor that was experimental and had a lot riding on it. So, as I started to say, I really didn't expect to be selected, but in the end I was, along with my friend. She was selected first and I think they must have gotten almost to the end of their group of women because they never did reach the forty mark. I think that they had thirty-eight or thirty nine. I don't know if I was the thirty-eighth or thirty-ninth, but that is how it all began.

J.K: So then you were inducted.

V.G: Yes, I didn't know at that time, but there were four of us who were inducted from the Chicago area. There were more than four women selected from the Chicago area, but when I say four I am referring to four Negro women who were selected. I knew of one and she is the one that I trained with; my first assignment was as Second Officer under her. When we moved to Fort Lewis I moved with the unit and was also second in Command in that unit. The induction consisted of the Army officer we had to report and we were sworn in and then officially members of the Women's Army Auxiliary; I guess the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps is the way it went.

J.K: And then Officer Training School?

V.G: Then off to Des Moines. Each step, (risas) of course became more and more final, like the whole application procedure, then the induction procedure, and then there we were all at the railroad station. I don't remember actually what the total number of women that went from Chicago, but it was a sizeable group. We went by train from Chicago to Des Moines and that is where the official training began. I remember, well, I had never been at an Army camp; I don't think that any of us had. Fort Des Moines is an old, established camp. Of course, there had not been women there before so they had to set up and establish housing and facilities for women. I do remember writing a letter home because officially we were dubbed "The Third Platoon" referring to the platoon of women who were being trained as officers. We were housed in a separate barracks, well, an Army barracks: one long building. We all slept in this one long room with the cots, footlockers and all of the Army paraphernalia. (risas) That first morning when I woke up it was quite a shock to look around and see not everybody arrived at the same time but to see myself among what ever the number was (let's say twenty or twenty-five) in this barracks.

J.K: These are all African American women?

V.G: Right. You have to remember that this was all before Truman truly desegregated the services.

J.K: Was it physically very rigorous, the training?

V.G: It seemed rigorous then, but from what I know about the Army now (risas) it was rigorous for us, but it couldn't compare with what the training is now. We had to, we had a regular scholastic thing, like map reading; what else did we have in the scholastic line? I guess map reading stands out because I found it quite difficult. The other things involved physical activity: the marching, the drilling, learning the commands. Moving emotionally from the civilian

attitude and point of view into the military point of view, moving from a kind of freedom into a regimented in six weeks? I think that was probably the most demanding part of it all.

J.K: Do you recall your instructors?

V.G: Not really. I don't recall? I know it was done by, it wasn't done by women, it was done by male officers and like corporals and sergeants.

J.K: What helped you get through that period?

V.G: It helped that we were young! (risas) I think that the thing that really sustained and enabled all of us was that underneath the adventurous aspect of it was a sense of duty; it was our country, that we were at war and that there was a purpose to all of this. So, that there was excitement and fatigue. (risas) In the beginning it was mostly fatigue because it was: up at the crack of dawn and a day that just continued at such a pace until taps at night you were just exhausted. So that is why the fact that we were all in our early twenties (the youngest person in our group from Chicago, Sarah was only about nineteen) so, all of that helped. It was the feeling, the sustaining feeling was that we were doing something purposeful and had value to it.

J.K: It was worth the effort?

V.G: Yes.

J.K: After Officer Training School you said that you moved on?

V.G: After we had successfully met the requirements and received, I guess we got gold bars, indicating that we were what within the Army was call Second Lieutenants and in the Auxiliary was Second Commanding Officer. And, they gave us a furlough, (risas) which meant that we could go home for ten days, show off these uniforms, be admired, and taken care of by all of our families and await our orders. We didn't know when we went home, we knew that there would be an assignment but we didn't know where or anything like that. So, that was the reward for that training period. Then we received orders to report back to, we must have reported back to Fort Des Moines and from there the Company was formed: the Thirty-Second Company. There were two Companies that were sent out to Fort Huachuca, the Thirty Second and the Thirty-Third with a commanding officer and two additional officers (the commanding officer and one to serve as executive or administrative officer and the third the supply officer). So, there were six officers, two companies of women? I'm trying to think of the exact number of women in each company... it must have been between a hundred fifty and two hundred women. Fort Huachuca is an old camp like Fort Des Moines, an old, established

fort. Just as we were being sent out to Huachuca, military regiments of men were being sent there also; the Ninety Second Division was stationed there. Fort Huachuca is near... I'm trying to remember, Phoenix? I'm trying to think of the other large city. It is in that area. The memorable thing about that dispatchment, being sent to Fort Huachuca, was really the arrival. I don't think I'll ever forget that. As the troop train took us to the boundaries of the camp. Of course, the male units that were already there knew that we were coming. There was a lot of controversy about women in the Service, a lot of rumors, most of them not really very complimentary. The curiosity, of course impelled as many of the enlisted men that were available and free to view this arrival; to come out and meet this so called "Women's Army". It was a little frightening in one sense that we were like engulfed and surrounded by all these men. But fortunately, the Army is usually prepared for most things, so the enlisted male units were not there without officers who made sure that some kind of decorum and order was maintained. As we embarked from the train and the companies were formed, we then marched the units into our quarters. They had set up a whole area for the women so that we had our own headquarters building, our own barracks, officer's quarters, mess hall, and the whole shebang. We were really a self-sustained unit and that is the way we operated for the period of time that we were there. A certain portion of the women were being assigned for training. You had to have cooks, you had to have pastry chefs, and you had to have motor pool people and all of that. So the initial phase was to see that our women were trained to take over. The basic idea in all of this is that women were to replace and release the male soldiers so that they could be sent overseas or dispatched someplace else. Our initial stay at Huachuca really involved a training period for the women in the various areas that were needed to function properly.

J.K: So, what would a typical day have been like for you?

V.G: It was falling out at six o'clock in the morning, (risas) assembling all of the, I think I was in the 32nd Company, so the Commanding Officer and the two additional officers, in other words, the three officers fell out at reveille, roll call was taken, then if there were, whoever was not present, it meant following up to see what the problem was. Why were they not there? Determining how many women needed to go on sick call, really needed to go on sick call (risas) and were not just sleeping late. That was the first, that is the beginning of your day, getting the troops together and organized. After that they fall out they go back to their barracks and prepare then for mess. Everyone reports for breakfast. Following that,

assignment of the women to their various duties, whether it is to go to whatever training assignment they had to follow through on that, which would usually take care of the morning (some in the morning and some in the afternoon). That was the way that the morning went until lunchtime. After lunch there was always a period of relaxation. In the afternoons would vary, there were plans, not plans, there were opportunities for recreation: basketball, baseball, trips, that kind of thing would take you through the afternoons. Then, whatever regimental duties that were passed on to us by the Post Commander for us to participate in and for the units to participate in, pretty much that kind of routine. It was like going to school and always there was the morale factor. This was for many their first time away from home. It was certainly for everybody a novel and an unusual experience in terms of group living. You do some of it in college, (risas) but not to the extent that took place there. Then, of course, always there was the interaction between the male troops and the female troops, finding a level where there could be enjoyment without too many disciplinary problems. That is pretty much the way it went.

J.K: Were you awarded any medals or special citations during your time?

V.G: The citations that I have are the ones that were given I think to us in general for service in the American Theater and the European Theater. I know it is on my discharge paper. I have to confess that I really do not know where they are. (risas) There is a discharge/service award for everyone who fulfilled their assignment. I did nothing that warranted any kind of special badge or award.

J.K: You spoke about morale; I know that family is a big part of that. How did you stay in touch with your family?

V.G: Primarily through letters, rather than telephone calls. Now, of course telephoning is like, we use the telephone more than we use the pen. Then it was basically pen. It never became dull; there was always some adventure around the corner. There was always the anticipation of, after all Fort Huachuca is between Arizona and California and the Rocky Mountains. I remember the Christmas on which I looked out and we had decorated a pine tree out in the center of the barracks area, and the sun, I had come to Arizona from Chicago, I watched the needles as they turned brown and fell to the ground (risas). It was very weird. The other physical experience like that which was more alarming was really a sand storm, which I had never experienced. I was unaware of sandstorms! It is unbelievable the way the sand just gets into everything. The wind and the sand, it was rather frightening. That is an aside in a

way, but my point is that the communication kind of took care of itself in that there was always something that was new that it seemed important to communicate to friends and to family members. Going back to the initial involvement, for example: the supplies and the uniforms. I guess that you could compare it to your parents getting you ready for school. Only again, here you are surrounded by a whole score of women. The Army, of course, outfitted us from the skin on out: underwear, stockings, the shirts, the skirts, the pants, jackets, and caps. Then when we were going to the cold weather areas, ski pants, boots. There you were always struggling to get something that really fit you properly. (risas) So that's what I mean when I said there was always something to communicate. The Army naturally makes provisions for furloughs and leaves. They also provide opportunities for you to take courses that might have nothing whatsoever to do with the service, but just maybe to follow something that you are particularly interested in. So that behind all this there is an awareness of the way people function and what they need in order to function well.

J.K: How about the food? Do you remember anything special about the food?

V.G: (risas) Pretty terrible! Remember, though the Army trains the... there is a Mess Officer and enlisted personnel that are under the Mess Officer. These people are trained, but this is cooking on a larger scale. So, there is always griping in Army mess, always. I guess it really wasn't that terrible, it just wasn't your mother's cooking. I think that is what it amounted to.

J.K: Did you have ample supplies that you needed?

V.G: (asiente) I don't ever remember? there probably was at times a delay in getting some item that you needed because they did not have a particular size or something like that. I remember how excited I was when I realized that the Army was supplying a Bali bra, which is what I had worn as a civilian. (risas) Although there was, I have forgotten now who the designer was for the WAC uniforms. A close friend of mine went into the Navy. Their uniforms were, both had a name designer. Her reason for going into the Navy, for selecting the Navy over the Army was that the Navy uniforms were much more chic. She just couldn't imagine herself in all that kaki.

J.K: What was your motivation for choosing the Army rather than the Navy?

V.G: At that time the Navy wasn't... The Army was the first. The WACs were first and I think that the Marine Corps may have been next, then the Navy.

J.K: What would you say was the most stressful aspect of?

V.G: Of the experience?... Two things. One in Fort Huachuca, when we realized (or when it

was brought to our attention by one of the sergeants) that there was lesbian activity in one of the barracks. We had not been given any special directive in terms of how to handle something like this. So, it was a question of trying this and trying that. Basically, as I recall the Commanding Officer did not ignore it, talked directly with the women who had been singled out (or whose names had been given) and there was some reshuffling in terms of the barrack assignments. No one was discharged or given any negative marks. I think that we were probably lucky in the sense that it was called to the officer's attention early, so that there was awareness on both sides. I don't know that it completely stopped, but it was not flagrant enough that it was disturbing to the other women in the barracks. That was the first disciplinary problem that was troubling. The second had to do with the assignment overseas. First we were in England, then we moved from England to Rouen, France. When we were in Rouen, I just recall that it was the area in which we were housed was an old, not a castle, it was more like a fort. It was a larger area surrounded by an eight-foot wall. The German prisoners of war were housed in one part and they were the ones who worked on the grounds and all of that. The part that was difficult was that it was cold. It was winter, so you expect it to be cold, but the heating was inadequate, the hot water was insufficient, the barracks were cold. We were working like around the clock, three shifts, because we were handling mail that had been piled up waiting for this Postal Unit to come and handle this mail. It was like a factory, which was all right except that if we could have been more comfortable. It was just, I can almost feel that dampness and dankness of the whole thing. There it was a physical thing.

J.K: Let's pause here for a minute. Were there entertainers that came?

V.G: Yes there were, but I guess that the only one that stands out in my mind really is Cab Calloway, for some reason. He must have been with the USO and sent overseas. That is the one name person that I remember. Both in Birmingham, England, that is where we were for the first part of the ETO [European Theater of Operations] for the first part of the assignment overseas, this has nothing to do with entertainers but the towns people in Birmingham particularly were so warm and receiving. When we had free time and went into town. One of the things that I remember is that I love music and the churches would have twelve o'clock or one o'clock concerts. If you had free time on that particular day you could go into town to the concerts. That was just like a wonderful reward. And of course we had free time to travel. I remember going down to Biarritz, what part is that?... I think that is Spain. It was called The

University of Biarritz. I went for two weeks and studied photography. (risas) And then there were recreational activities for the troops. Growing up when I was in high school I did track and played sports, basketball and stuff like that. We had a basketball team and the team traveled to various parts and had like tournaments and stuff like that. (risas) Always I think when we were out on the edge in terms of, "I don't think I can do much more." something like this would become available. And the townspeople were really very supportive. Then of course in Rouen, the damage was more prevalent and visible.

J.K: From the bombing primarily?

V.G: Yes. I mean, like in England, in Birmingham, for example it was, I guess it is part of the English character, they cleaned up as much as they could as soon as it happened. In Rouen you were just always aware of it. I think also that the prisoners of war made you constantly aware of the War; it was ever present. And the cathedral at Rouen, that is Joan of Arc, that beautiful cathedral which was damaged. Two years ago we were in Paris. We took a train down through Rouen. I really wanted to see if I could find the area where we had been stationed. I didn't do it right; I should have planned all this in advance, but I didn't and we only had that one-day. The only part of it that I really got to explore was the cathedral; it was something to see the restoration. I think that I wandered off of what you asked me.

J.K: That's fine. Was there anything particularly humorous or funny that you recall during that time?, I know that it was a serious time, but?

V.G: I really don't recall anything funny.

J.K: No pranks in the barracks?

V.G: No, I'm sure there must have been. I'm sure there must have been, but I can't get away from this mental picture I have particularly in Rouen of our leaving the work area and moving to our quarters and our being all bundled up, and walking as fast as we could to get to our quarters (which were not that much warmer than the outside). I'm sure there must have been many funny things, but they have escaped me, interestingly enough.

J.K: Did you keep a diary at all?

V.G: No, I am not a diary person at all. About four years ago one of the officers that I served with, the head of our unit of the whole 6888th Battalion, the officer was Charity Adams, who just died about a month ago. Her second in command of the Battalion was Campbell, Noel Abby Campbell. We had trained together in Fort Des Moines, the tree of us. She was from Tuskegee, and Tuskegee was one of the schools, one of the Black universities, historic

universities that I had never seen. I had never seen the campus. A friend's granddaughter was graduating so I went to Tuskegee to her graduation. Campbell, the second in command of the Battalion, Tuskegee was her home; she was born and grew up there. We arranged to meet at that time. I'm trying to think now, why did I start on that? You asked me about a diary. She said that when she was discharged from the service and returned home (her brother had also served in the Army) her father said, 'Sit down and write your experiences from the beginning to the end!', which she did.

J.K: Good for her.

V.G: I don't know why she didn't publish them because Charity Adams who was the highest ranking did; she published hers in a book. Abby said that she was so grateful to her father for insisting that she do that. There were several who did memoirs. I regret it now that I look back on it, but just as there were several in our class and many among the enlisted who decided to stay in the service and completed tours of duty, like fifteen and twenty years. It never occurred to me. I saw the whole experience as, it was an experience within a period of time which provided invaluable, invaluable opportunities: my first plane ride, first ride in a Pullman car, my first across from coast to coast, those kinds of things. I am very grateful, very appreciative, but I had no desire whatsoever; I wanted to move on to the next phase.

J.K: Do you remember when the war ended, where you were?

V.G: Um, yeah. I was preparing really to return home. I think I remember more vividly Roosevelt's death and the feeling of the terrible, terrible sadness at his death. When we were in London many times during the period when we were over there, we knew what it was like to hear the warnings and...

J.K: Sirens?

V.G: Sirens and bombs... It had an impact; there is no doubt about that.

J.K: So you applied to end your enlistment.

V.G: Yeah, as I said in the beginning it was the Auxiliary; then after the act was passed to make this a full part of the Army we had an option at that point to leave or to stay, and I had a conflict. I remember that I wrote not only home but also to very close friends saying that I wasn't sure that I wanted to stay in. All of the advice that I got was, "Stay". (risas) So I thought, 'Well, maybe they know something that I don't know.' I don't know that they knew something but they weren't as close to it as I was so therefore they could be more objective. They saw that there would be more value in remaining than in leaving at that juncture. They

were so right because on discharge I finished my college and graduate school on my G.I. Bill.

J.K: What was your major?

V.G: Sociology, I went to Howard and finished college there and then went to Catholic University and did graduate work in social work. That provided me with a lifetime career.

J.K: Do you think that would have happened without the G.I. Bill?

V.G: I don't know. I was floundering at the point that I went into the Army. It was like everything, not everything but certain things became resolved and I became focused and knew what I wanted, what I wanted to do. I wasn't sure about the occupation, but my Company Commander was a graduate social worker; many of course were teachers. But from high school and college I had been attracted to two things: one was to be a phys-ed teacher and the other was to be a librarian. (risas) Neither of which I ended up being.

J.K: It sounds like you had some good friends before during and after that you have continued relationships.

V.G: Yes, there are all kinds of organizations but some how or other I have really not become involved in any of the organizations. Our Company Clerk is from St. Louis, Missouri, and when I was growing up I spent summers there. My one remaining Aunt used to live in St. Louis so I was back and forth there. So Ruby and I have maintained a relationship. My Company Commander, Irma Wertz who lives in Detroit and we were inducted together, but afterward she remarried and moved to Detroit and has continued to live there. She and I are in frequent communication. And then Sarah Emmert, this is the youngest one; this is Sarah. This is Irma; Irma is the one that lives in Detroit? we are good buddies. Sarah now lives in Florida and she writes a newsletter and it is headed, "Third Platoon" which refers to our training right at the beginning when we were the third platoon of the company. She keeps us in touch. When the Women's Memorial was finally completed in Washington D.C. I went to D.C. along with a friend, Frances (who said that she couldn't imagine herself being in the WACS and went into the Navy). She and her husband and I, we went to Washington D.C. and we went to the dedication of the memorial. They had all kinds of activities and I think it was on the final day as I was leaving one of the tents where something was going on I heard somebody say, 'Violet?'. I looked around and there was Sarah whom I had not seen in what, forty years? (risas) I had no trouble what so ever recognizing her and obviously she had no trouble recognizing me. She said, 'We have been wondering where you were!' A group of them from that first officer's class and a couple from the Postal directors Overseas, a group of

them were still sitting together in an area in that tent. That was really, that is the second time really that I have been with a group. Quite a few years ago, probably ten, there was a meeting; I guess it was an annual meeting of Women in the Service held in Detroit. That was the only one that I had been to. It was a big, three-day thing, one of those.

J.K: Would you say that your experience in the military enhanced your professional role afterward in social work?

V.G: Well, yeah. I doubt that I would have gone into social work if I had not had the interpersonal experience with Irma and a couple of other people who were also in the service and were moving in that direction. It drew my attention to a profession that I had really not considered up until that time. So, once having decided on that, I knew where I was headed. The other thing of value is that I had interesting group experiences in that right after high school I had worked as a clerk for A. Philip Randolph. I don't know if the name means anything to you, but he was the one who organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first Black labor union. He was ahead in the sense of the Martin Luther King era in that the first march on Washington was organized by him. The point of all this is that it enabled me to really see group activism and to see that there could be a role in that for me if this was something that I wanted to pursue. It really formed my political and social point of view, the association and activity and what not. So that I went from having gone to a high school, elementary and high school in Batavia, Illinois, which is a suburb of Chicago, a town of five thousand people. So that was really in development from there to the experiences that followed with the labor union movement, followed by movement into the WAC, which moved me then into both an administrative as well as a command level. It kind of enabled me to move away from a bucolic, somewhat shy, introspective person. So that I would say that the Army influence was like the final push in a very positive direction, if that answers what you asked.

J.K: Very much so. Is there anything else that you would like to add that we haven't covered?

V.G: I think that we have covered everything. When we went to Washington to the dedication of the Women's Memorial it was such an exciting, exhilarating moment! It is one thing to see two WACs. It is mind boggling to see a whole amphitheater of women representing all branches of the service (which was not true at the time that the WAC was formed) and to see the range both in age and rank because by and large those in attendance, certainly there were the retired and the women from World War II and subsequent wars, Vietnam and what

not but the bulk of them were women who were on active duty, in all branches of the service, representing all colors, all races, and all ranks. It was something that I would have never envisioned in 1942 was right there in front of me. It was really so exciting. The final touch was the fly over of the Air Force with women pilots! (risas) It was a great moment, a great moment!

J.K: Well, I very much appreciate you sharing your memories with us.

V.G: Well, happy to do it. I hope it has meaning.

J.K: Very much so.

V.G: Ok

Transcripción no. 18

Mary Dannaher

WAVES

LINK: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/loc.natlib.afc2001001.74608/>

Fecha de la entrevista: Febrero 24, 2010

Duración: No especificado

Nombre: Mary Barbara Brennan Dannaher

Lugar de nacimiento: Boston, Massachusetts, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: Old Saybrook, Connecticut, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: No especificado

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Entrada en el servicio: Enlistada

Rama de servicio: WAVES (Navy Women's Reserve)

Unidad de servicio: Organización de comunicación e inteligencia

Ubicación de servicio: Washington, DC

Rango mayor: Especialista (criptógrafo) de primera clase

Prisionera de guerra: No

Entrevistador: James Lyko

Colaboradora: Eileen Hurst

Trascriptora: Deborah Osborne

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: Central Connecticut State University

Colección #: AFC/2001/001/74608

Sujetos:

Dannaher, Mary Barbara

World War, 1939-1945--Personal Narratives

United States. WAVES (Navy Women's Reserve).

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Transcripción

Entrevistador James Lyko: Good afternoon. My name is Jim Lyco. I am here in Old Saybrook, Connecticut, on February 24, 2010, to interview Barbara Dannaher, retired U.S. Navy, I guess; is that correct?

Mary Dannaher: Not retired, Jim.

J.L: Okay. But that was your branch of the military?

M.D: But, formerly.

J. L: Formerly.

M. D: Yeah.

J.L: I'm here to interview Barbara for the Veteran's History Project at Central Connecticut State University an Archive Partner of the Library of Congress. It is a privilege and an honor to interview Barbara. So please, Barbara, would you please tell us your story.

M.D: Certainly, Jim. And it's an honor for me to be here too. I was born in Boston, actually, in Boston -- Dorchester, Massachusetts -- on November 23, 1920. And I -- at the age of four, I think -- we moved down to a suburb on the South Shore. East Braintree. And I attended school in Weymouth at Sacred High School from first grade up through high school. And after I graduated from high school my family moved to Manchester, Connecticut, where my father actually was born. And he had relatives there. But his company had transferred him to Hartford, so we were living in Manchester. And I worked at a few jobs when I got out of school. I loved being with my cousins. And eventually went to work for United Aircraft as a clerk. And I worked for the subcontractor division there under Reed Miller, who was a fine gentlemen. And he was also vice president of the Missouri Aircraft, because some of these companies moved to the central part of the United States because of the war. And I was going quite steadily with a young man, Thomas Dannaher, who we became quite serious before he enlisted in the Marine Corps in February of 1942. And our first date was December 7, 1941.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: So we always could remember that.

J.L: You will never forget that date.

M.D: Right. And so after Tom left Paris Island, the others in our group, young people -- the men were leaving because they were either enlisting or being drafted -- the girls were very active doing all kinds of things: Knitting and so forth. I felt that I was doing a good job because

I was working for the Aircraft, and they were providing machines and the airplanes and everything else for the war. But I felt I wasn't doing enough. And there were quite a few advertisements on radio about the military. And they had started some women's organizations like the Army women. And then I heard an advertisement on the radio that said that the Navy was going to have women accepted for volunteer emergency service. And, of course, that acronym being, WAVES. And I thought, this is what I would like to do.

J.L: What is the year now? Is that 1940?

M.D: This was 1942. And it was probably around the summertime. And I knew that it was important -- the work I was doing for the Aircraft was important. I realized that. However, I was filing. And it seemed like it was a job that wasn't quite the kind of job I wanted.

J.L: Absolutely.

M.D: And so I talked to my mother and dad. My dad was just bursting with pride. He thought that was great. My mother, a little bit more reticent. I was an only child. So having her daughter, her only daughter, going into the military, she wasn't quite sure. So and, of course, it was unheard of, of women being in the military.

J.L: Right.

M.D: So I knew that I was going to have to have a release from the Aircraft. And I went to the secretary and tried to -- I didn't really want to approach Mr. Miller because he had a big job, and I was just a little person. So I went to Margaret and I asked her if she would intercede for me. And she said, 'Oh, sure'. And she said, 'Oh, Barbara, don't be upset', she said, 'Mr. Miller is fine. He'll understand'. So I was called into his office and shaking in my boots. And he was such a nice man. And he kind of frowned and he looked at my application. And he said, 'Well, Ms. Brennan', he said, 'you've been working with us now for several months, and you feel that you can do a better job for the whole war effort by going into the WAVES?' I said, 'Well, ah, ah' -- not knowing exactly what to say. He said, 'Well, let me tell you', he said, 'I've given it a lot of consideration'. And he said, 'I think, somehow, the Aircraft is going to be able to make it without your services'. And so that was very nice of him. And, of course, the humor kind of relieved everything.

J.L: How old were you at that time, Barbara?

M.D: At that time I was 21. And I was -- oh, it didn't take me very long to get on a train and go down to New York. And I can't remember the name of the street. I think it was Hall or something. It wasn't Wall Street. It was one of the streets off of Wall Street. The Navy had its

Headquarters down there. And I went in and filled out a few forms. And I raised my right hand and promised to support the Constitution. And I was in the Navy.

J.L: Oh, my. Did you do that alone? Or did you -- or were you --

M.D: I had a girl friend with me. And she took the boat to go around the Statue of Liberty. I couldn't get her to join with me. And so, yes. I went into the office alone. Yes. And there were a number of others that were sworn at the same time. So I went home and told my dad and mom that I was in, and the Navy would notify me when I had to go on active duty. So the next couple of months were one of celebration, sort of, and kind of preparing. And since I had a lot of friends up in Massachusetts, they always wanted to entertain me before I left.

J.L: Sure.

M.D: And so I enjoyed that.

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: And my father said, 'We never see you on weekends. You're always up in Weymouth'. And, fortunately, the girls' mothers were very happy to have me as a guest, which was very nice of them. But I had an opportunity for one weekend and it sounded like it was going to be great weekend. It was the weekend of November 28, 1942. And the girls had set this beautiful date up for me because there was going to be six of us. And the young man had a nice Cadillac convertible, which, of course, you know, was quite the thing at the time.

J.L: Sure.

M.D: And the six of us left for the Boston College and Holy Cross game at Fenway Park. And then I was told that we had reservations at the Coconut Grove that evening for dinner and, I understood, dancing. And since I really loved to dance, I thought this was going to be wonderful. And the following day I was treated to a stage show in Boston. And the weekend was just going to be a great weekend. Something that young people would look forward to. And so we went to the game. I don't think Boston College had lost one game that season and Holy Cross beat them. Of course, we were crushed because we were with the Boston College group. And we, after the game, we drove over to the Coconut Grove. Parked the car in the parking lot there. And we were ushered -- we had reservations -- and we were ushered into one of the newest bars that the Coconut Grove had. The Coconut Grove seemed to have a number of small bars off the main part of the club. And we were rather disappointed because there was a piano player there and that was it. That was the entertainment. And none of us were drinkers. And, I mean, if you have one drink, you nursed it the whole evening and maybe

have a lot left over. But it was kind of disappointing. And having lived in Boston, or rather in the suburb, at that age, I had attended the Mayfair Club across the way. So I suggested to the group that maybe we could move over there. We hadn't had dinner or anything. And so they were kind of reluctant, in a way, because at least they had a table where we were. But I said, 'I have a friend who has a neighbor who works there, so maybe we can get a table'. We went over there. No luck. So what to do? We went back to the Coconut Grove, or down to the Melody Lounge. And it was so dark. They have a spotlight on the piano player that was up behind the bar. And so many military. Just maybe 10 deep around. Just all standing. Very few tables. It was very dark down there. It was all lined with black fabric. And I saw this man reach up and unscrew a lightbulb. And I thought to myself, 'It's dark enough in here, you know, what is wrong with' -- well, we couldn't find a place, and we weren't satisfied. So someone suggested we crash the Holy Cross celebration up at the Palmer House. So we got in a cab and off we went. Well, it was kind of dull up there because it didn't seem to be much of a celebration, but they had a lot of food. So we enjoyed it. And at that time we could hear a lot of sirens. So we decided to go back to the Grove and take the car and drive down to the South Shore and find a place that we knew of that we could have dinner. So the taxi cab driver said, 'The Coconut Grove is on fire'. And he said, 'Is your car parked there?' And it was. He said, 'My suggestion is, you get down there to that car and get it out of the parking lot before the fire engines get in there'. Well, he let us off. And as we walked toward the parking lot, there were people walking away from the Grove who were almost like in a dream. They were just so --

J.L: They had gotten out in time.

M.D: They had gotten out. But they just couldn't believe what was going on. And it seemed like the building behind us, the Coconut Grove building was bursting. It was almost like it was something like dynamite, you know. And later on we came to the conclusion it was probably a lot of the sodas and the beer and everything that was under pressure. And, of course, when the fire hit that. But there was not one person in that bar where we had been that got out alive.

J.L: Wow.

M.D: So that was a very sad time. And I was happy to be able to call my parents the next day and say, 'Yes, I was at the Coconut Grove, but here I am. And I am fine'. So December 12th I was notified to appear at Grand Central Station to board a troop train for Cedar Falls, Iowa, to

Iowa State Teacher's College for my initial training. We had a very nice group of people who were lined up. We had to go on the train by alphabetical order. And there was a, let's say, a very experienced Seaman -- well, he wasn't a Seaman, he was a Chief -- who was checking off the names. But I'm sure that he had at least 25 or 30 years in the service. And he was not very, let's put it, I don't think he was unhappy having girls that he had to check off. But he was kind of -- he didn't know whether we liked this very much or not. So anyway, my mother and father and other parents were standing over at the side as he called our names. Well, of course, my maiden name is Brennan. And I was one of the first ones that was called to go aboard the train. But instead of having us go aboard, he had all of our suitcases taken. And he asked us to line up according to the name -- to the way we were called. And then we would proceed on to the train sort of in line. And so he kept calling the names off. Finally, he got to this one name. And the name was "Darling." And that's the girl's name. And he said, 'Darling?' And she said, 'Yes'.

J.L: (risas)

M.D: (risas) Get in line. But, anyway, that was a beautiful train. Oh, we had the best accommodations. I think we did have berths. But, I mean, everything was beautiful. A nice dining car. We had good food. And we traveled, strangely enough, from New York up to Niagara Falls. We went over to Canada. We traveled across Canada, well, as far as -- we came down into the United States and crossed the Mississippi River. And then through Chicago and on to Waterloo, Iowa, where we left the train and boarded buses into Cedar Falls, which was a charming small town --

J.L: Yeah.

M. B. B. D: -- with a big school and 1,050 enlisted WAVES. And this was the first group of WAVES, enlisted WAVES. We had WAVE officers. But these were -- we were the first group of enlisted WAVES. And our training was for six weeks at Cedar Falls. And it was a -- they had no students in the school at that time. They had emptied the school of all the students. It was a beautiful school. And we had very nice accommodations. I roomed with a girl from New York. And, yeah, she was from New York. And we would march from our rooms to meals. And, of course, we had several different sittings for the meals because we were a large group. And, of course, in that time we had shots, hair cuts, we were measured for uniforms. And, by the way, the WAVE uniform was designed by a very famous French designer, Mainbocher. And they had fit just so, which made us very proud. And we were issued two woolen suits, dark

blue. Navy blue. And we were issued a raincoat, a purse, a white shirt for dress, a blue shirt for work, and a black tie. And that was about it. We also had inspection. And inspection of our rooms, as well as inspection of ourselves. Once we got into uniform, we were inspected just about once a week. But room inspection was Saturday morning. And we were cautioned: Go over with a white glove if you have one. If not, a white towel. And check everything in your room, because when the Captain comes in he's going to check everything with a white glove. And he will have a Yeoman with him. And if he isn't satisfied, you're on report. So we wanted to be very careful. And we would work Friday night until long after we were supposed to be in bed making sure our room was right. Well, we had a desk, a good-sized desk. And the two of us at one time said, you know, this desk should be sort of turned, and I think we would get better light. Because we had a lot of courses that we were attending, and we had homework and all. So we twisted the desk. And we looked at the rest of the furniture. We had bunk beds. And everything seemed in very good order. The Captain came in. They went over everything with the white gloves. And he started out the door and he said, everything in here is okay and shipshape but get that desk squared.

J.L: (risas)

M.D: (risas)

J.L: So much for your decorating.

M.D: So much for decoration. It was a very interesting time when we were at school. We could go into Waterloo on Saturdays. And for a dollar we could have a steak and all the trimmings. And, of course, in Iowa, steak, it was fresh steak.

J.L: I'm sure.

M.D: It was great. And the only thing is, by that time, we had assignments. And one of my assignments was to see that the same number of girls got on the bus that got off the bus in Waterloo. Another one of my assignments was, as we were getting shots during the day and medical exams and all, if anyone passed out in the mess line, it was up to me and one other person to drag the person --

J.L: Out of line.

M.D: -- out of line and then see that she got attention. So we did have a few fainters.

J.L: (risas)

M.D: Well, you know, we had a lot of shots, and we were vaccinated. Everything was taken care of. But then at the end of six weeks we had lists of assignments.

J.L: What kind of classes were you taking? You said you were taking --

M.D: We were taking Naval history.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: We were taking, the kind of -- we were never given any kind of training with guns or anything like that, because the WAVES were never allowed to go overseas, as a matter of fact. And that's the way we liked it. And we had a mentor, so to speak -- or champion, maybe that's the better word -- in David I. Walsh from Massachusetts, who stood up for us when, I guess, Congress was thinking probably since the Army women went over, that the WAVES may go over also. And we didn't want to. So he stood up for us in Congress and said we would stay. The reason most of us joined the Navy, well, one of the reasons, was to free a man to go to sea. We could do the kind of work that he was doing, most of us could. And most of the work that they were doing could be done by a woman. So that was one of the reasons that the WAVES, for the most part, joined that particular branch of the Navy. It was -- our assignments were going to be posted. And, of course, we were all very concerned about where we were going. So I went down to look for my name, and I found it on two assignment sheets. One assignment sheet was, they were going to send me out to Norman, Oklahoma, to read blueprints. And the other assignment sheet was to go to Washington, D.C. And it didn't say what I was going to be doing. So, of course, I liked the idea of Washington because it was near our home. Because as fast as -- as quick as I was to leave home, I was just as quick to get back there. And so it was one of those things. So I did go to the Officer of the Day. And she said they would check that out and find out. And I would be notified as to where I should be assigned.

J.L: You didn't have a choice between the two?

M.D: I had no choice.

J.L: They were going to make the decision?

M.D: Oh, they made the decision. As a matter of fact, when I read it at first I thought, 'Does the Navy know something about me I don't?' And that is, I can be in two places at one time. And, no. They came back to next day and told me I would be in Washington. And, relief. That was great. And we had a six-day leave. We could go home.

J.L: Oh, nice.

M.D: And it was lovely. And we were sort of encouraged to buy our tickets and go on our own and pay for our tickets and then be reimbursed when we arrived at our assignment. So most

of us did. We did not have the lovely accommodations, believe me, because we all wanted to be frugal and maybe make a little bit of money on it because they would pay a certain amount. So I got home. Spent five days enjoying my family and friends. And my future mother-in-law -- who I was very friendly with -- decided to go into Hartford with me, because I had to go by bus and my mother worked. And so she didn't want me to go alone. And helped me with my baggage and all and took me to the station in Hartford. And that was just wonderful and so very nice of her. And for that good deed, unfortunately, on the way home that evening -- she rode in the car of the Ride Share that her husband had -- and there was an accident. And it crushed the bone on her ankle. And so it was never the same after that. She almost lost her foot, as a matter of fact. And I felt terrible about it. So can we take a break?

J.L: Absolutely.

M.D: Is it to soon?

J.L: No.

M.D: I'm tired of talking.

J.L: Did you travel with your uniform on?

M.D: Yes. We were told when we left boot camp, so to speak, that we were to always be in uniform. There was no -- no letup. None. Even when we went home on leave we were to wear our uniform. So that's what I did. And, of course, I was proud to wear it. I loved the uniform.

J.L: Sure.

M.D: The only thing is, we were rather disappointed, those of use who were enlisted WAVES, that our hat wasn't quite as stylish as the officers'. Our hat was a sailor hat.

J.L: What did it look like, Barbara?

M.D: All right. I have the hat.

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: And -- oh, thank you, Jim. And I have turned the brim up for so long that it's really out of shape now. But it was a very -- the top unbuttoned so that it could be taken off.

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: And it could be washed and kept nice and clean. And, of course, on the front we had U.S. Navy.

J.L: Hold it up a little higher so we can see it.

M.D: All right.

J.L.: Okay.

M.D: We had U.S. Navy. And it was not the most popular hat going. But, actually, after awhile you got so that you kind of got used to it.

J.L: But that was -- you had that on when you were --

M.D: I had it on. But my head has gotten larger.

J.L: It looks great on you.

M.D: But then later on, because I think there were a lot of complaints, we got the garrison cap. And, of course, this was more stylish.

J.L: You make me want to salute.

M.D: (risas)

J.L: And what was that? How did you get the different hat? Did someone along the line -- I mean, were there complaints about the other hat and --

M.D: Evidently --

J.L: -- they paid attention to that?

M.D: -- a few complaints reached the higher-ups.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: And they were ready to --

J.L: And someone heard it.

M.D: That's right.

J.L: And things changed. Okay.

M.D: When we arrived -- when I arrived in Washington, I was assigned, first of all, to go to the Navy Yard. They never said we would go straight to our office. We were to go to the Navy Yard. So we went to the Navy Yard and there we expected to be reimbursed for the trip that we took from Waterloo -- Cedar Falls, Iowa, home. And then back down to Washington. Well, come to find out the government never pays for train trips over certain parts of the country that is designated as: Land grants. And so by the time we got reimbursed it was not quite what we expected.

J.L: Oh, my. Surprise. Surprise. Yes.

M.D: So, anyway, that was one of the things that we sort of said: Uh-oh. Well, now we're on the Navy case for our travel. Anyway, it was fine. But then there were some of us who were assigned to Nebraska Avenue -- not Nebraska Avenue. I'm sorry. We were assigned to the Navy Department on -- right downtown Washington. I think it was -- I'm not sure. I don't know

whether it was on Pennsylvania Avenue or one of those. But, anyway, that's where our assignment was. But before that our billet would be at the national -- at the Capitol Park Hotel. And that was on South Capitol Street right across from Union Station, which was a great central place to be -- and -- but because we were walking everywhere or taking mass transport. So the next day we were to arrive at the Navy Department ready to go to work. Before we were even allowed to go to the office, our desk, anyplace, we had to take an oath because we were going to be working on top secret materials.

J.L: So you're hearing this for the first time, right?

M.D: Yes.

J.L: Your assignment?

M.D: Yes. So we swore not to divulge any information, to the grave. This has changed since then. But I'll explain that later. We were sent to offices. And the offices were very crowded. These buildings were put up during World War I. And the Navy Department really didn't have any place like the Army did at the Pentagon. So they were sort of spread out all over the city. And, but, this was the main office. We worked there for several months right into the spring. I had two roommates. Very interesting young ladies. One was Natalie Fiske, F-i-s-k-e. Her grandfather was president of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. And she was assigned to Nebraska Avenue as I was. And she was instrumental in introducing me around town. And we were taken out to lunch one time at the National Press Club. And the man who was manager of the Metropolitan, evidently -- in Washington -- had visited with Eleanor Roosevelt, previously. And, of course, he had a lot to tell us about that. And she was a very interesting girl, herself. She was brought up not in the United States. She was brought up in Paris. I don't know why. Her father was evidently employed there. My other roommate was very active in France with the State Department. She was a clerk. But she ended up, before she came to the United States, a secretary to Admiral Leahy's wife. And she was a good friend of Robert Murphy. And I don't know if you are familiar with the situation. But Robert Murphy and Mark Clark did a lot of undercover work in France before the -- oh, what's the word I want to use -- before we went into Normandy.

J.L: Yeah. Going across the Channel.

M.D: Yes.

J.L: The invasion.

M.D: Yes. The invasion. And so she would not -- she was not cleared to work with us at --

J.L: Okay.

M.D: -- Nebraska Avenue. Well, she had a lot of friends. And it was one of those things. We didn't know. No one told us anything. Nor did we really want to know.

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: We were very, very aware of secrecy and how it could be very dangerous for all of our military, all of the people involved in the war effort, if anyone divulged anything. And just discussing things in public, like a restaurant or a soda fountain or someplace, you knew enough to just keep your mouth shut about anything that went on when it was related. So we were -- Natalie and I on occasion did travel, because we had a long way to travel once they -- in the spring when they transferred our offices up to Nebraska Avenue.

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: We took over the -- the Navy was able to procure the beautiful buildings that had belonged to the Mount Vernon Young Ladies' Seminary. And it was a gorgeous building. Lovely grounds. And an attached chapel where we used to have our religious -- we had Protestant and Catholic services there. And I'm not sure if the Jewish didn't have services there also, in the chapel. So that was very convenient, because then our WAVES quarters were built across the street from work. And they started with three buildings. Ended up with 25. That is the number of WAVES that were working on codes and ciphers for the United States Navy. And, of course, this building and the work we were doing was with the Vice Chief of Naval Operations. And so, actually, we were working for that effort -- that part of the Navy.

J.L: And how many were you, did you say? Twenty-five?

M.D: Twenty-five -- well, I showed --

J.L: You said twenty-five buildings?

M.D: Twenty-five buildings.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: Yeah. Filled with WAVES.

J.L: Filled? Okay. So that's a lot?

M.D: So thousands --

J.L: Yes.

M.D: -- of women worked on these. And, of course, there were some men also. As a matter of fact, our office, we had mostly officers from the University of Ohio. The whole -- the head of the whole Nebraska Avenue program there was -- he wasn't a Captain. I can't remember

exactly. But his name was Ford. And, of course, he was Navy. And he later became an editor of the Heritage Magazine after he got out of the service. So I wish I could remember his title but I don't. We were very, very aware of the fact that this was an important job. First of all, we worked around -- we didn't -- we worked -- first of all, when we went there, we used to work watches. Eight hours for two days -- well, eight hours each day. Say, 8:00 to 4:00. Then we were off until the next day at 4:00. We worked 4:00 to 12:00 for two days. Then we were off until late watch started at 12:00. And we worked 12:00 to 8:00 for two days. Well, this was not a very healthy situation. All we did was sleep and eat and go to work. So then they changed it. And we worked five-day watches. So we were on watch from 8:00 to 4:00 for five days and so forth. So that worked out. And since we were right across the street and living in the WAVE quarters, it was easy because our mess hall was there. A huge mess hall. And we even fed the Marines who were stationed over at American University. And when they would come to eat in our mess hall, they fed us as women should be fed. Smaller portions and so forth. And, of course, the Marines would go back with their tray and the bread would be piled up. Like half a loaf of bread for each meal. But the food was excellent. The food was just wonderful. And we had Navy cooks. And when we went -- visited other Naval bases, like to go to a dance or something like that and they invited us for their meal, we were -- we were inundated with food. And we realized that the men ate differently than we did.

J.L: They still do.

M.D: Yes. Well, we were doing very, very well at Nebraska Avenue and -- at the WAVE quarters -- until summer came. And, of course, there was no air-conditioning in either the places where we slept or in the mess hall. And the mess hall, sometimes I think -- well, if you have ever been in Washington in the summertime, you know it can get very hot and humid. And we were all -- we had to eat with our uniform. Full uniform. That meant wool suits. Long sleeved shirts and ties. Hats. So as the women started passing out in line --

J.L: Yeah. Yeah.

M.D: -- they knew something had to be changed. So we received a new uniform for summer. And it was a nice -- very nice uniform. Very cool. We still had to wear our tie. We still had to wear our hat. But it was cool. It was a dress. Yes. And so it was a lot happier. And lots of times WAVES would just not go to mess. They just wouldn't go because they knew it was just too hot there. So they would pay for their own food and go down to the local restaurant to eat. But it wasn't convenient because there wasn't usually -- it was a long walk to go down to the

center where we were and to find any place to eat. But it turned out very well at the mess hall. And there were -- we had so many things. We had a pool. We had dancing lessons. We had sports. We put on plays, if anyone was interested. The Warrant Officer in our unit that worked with us became quite famous as a TV actor. And he appeared with Eve Arden in that show that she was in.

J.L: Miss Brooks?

M.D: Yes. Miss Brooks.

J.L: Is that so?

M.D: And he was her boyfriend. Right.

J.L: Really?

M.D: Yes. And we didn't have shredding machines then. We had what we called burn bags. And so any materials that we worked on we had to put in these burn bags -- we had to discard -- we had to put in the burn bags. And then once every so often, the burn bags would have to go down to a place where they burned them. So they always had to have an escort. And the poor young man that worked with us, like the fellow who was our Warrant Officer, had to have a side arm. And, of course, we would always kid them and say, please, don't shoot yourself in the foot because -- have you ever been taught how to use a gun to begin with? Nothing -- we didn't have any accidents anyway. But during that time I worked on JN-25, which was a very important Naval code. We did not compromise 25 when I went into the service and went to work on it. JN-25 was compromised long before that. And there were people in Hawaii, a group of intelligence officers -- a small group -- who were working on it and were doing a very good job, as a matter of fact. But, unfortunately, at that time, the Navy only had 42 people in the whole Navy --

J.L: Who could speak Japanese?

M.D: -- who could speak Japanese fluently.

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: And so that was a drawback. However, we must have been very cautious about how we reacted to the code when we did compromise it, because the Japanese continued to use it right through the war. And they may have changed things so that we would have to go to work and figure out what the change -- how the change was made. At one time they were using -- in a message they would put -- I can't say it was a graph -- they put a piece -- I don't know. It was almost like something that was cut out of a piece of paper so that it would be cut out in

certain places. And you would put it down over the message.

J.L: Oh. A mask?

M.D: And you just -- a mask. Yes. And so then we had to figure out, with the mask, you know - it wasn't our job to figure it out. We were still doing additives. Adding five numerals to five numerals. Getting a sum. And that sum always had to be divisible by three. There was never any carrying. In other words, if you said 9 plus 5, the answer was 4. And so, but three was a superstition, evidently, with the Japanese.

J.L: Oh, really?

M.D: Because it did limit them, somewhat, in the use of numbers. We were very successful, but we were always cautioned if we were successful. And that was a secret. Almost -- it was almost body language when you saw other people from other sections in the cafeteria that things were good that day.

J.L: Oh. Okay.

M.D: It was maybe more smiles on a face or something like that. But we were always cautioned that when we left the building, poker face.

J.L: Don't indicate anything?

M.D: Don't indicate by your expressions that something good was going on inside. So we took secrecy very seriously. And it was all -- we met some wonderful people. I stayed with JN-25 for about a year and a half, almost two years. And then I was transferred with my Section Head to weather codes. And in the weather codes we had a job -- and it -- we kept getting these messages, and we didn't know how to classify them. So we would say, well, we have -- already have top secret. So, and we already had top secret ultra. So we got so we would say, well, we'll classify this as top secret ultra ultra. When we got to the third ultra, we had one of the officers coming in and he said to the group -- and we worked in a very small space. I don't think we even had a window. And he said, look -- he said, regarding classification -- he said, pretty soon it's going to get to the point where nobody is going to be able to read this message. And he said, and we do have to read it. So, he said, let's cut it down to one ultra. And so that was the way it was. But it was a lot of -- it was very interesting to work with the meteorologists because we found out so much about weather.

J.L: Oh. I'll bet.

M.D: And when I hear people complain about the meteorologists and the fact that, oh, they never do it right. They never get it right. Well, let me tell you: Unless you are getting the

weather right now, ten minutes from now the wind can change.

J.L: Right.

M.D: The whole picture can change. And it's no fault of the meteorologist.

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: He has done the right reading the first time, or she has. And from that point on, it's just up to God.

J.L: Barbara, tell me this: When you would take whatever kind of a document that had numbers that was part of the JN, Japanese Navy code, when you finished doing all your additives and math and whatever the process was, did you come up with the message?

M.D: No.

J.L: Or did you come up with numbers that someone else would read?

M.D: No. We had one sheet with just additives to it.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: And the additive, of course, paired so that we had to get a sum. Now, there were probably four or five tables in our room, big. And there was a big sign there that said: In case of air raids, we continue working. So we knew what we had to do. But at each table we had probably about 10 WAVES. And maybe on occasion we might have a Sailor. Because we did have maybe -- I think we had probably five Sailors in the building, well, in our section, JN-25. Then what we would do is, as soon as we finished -- now you can say, all you did was add numbers and divide. And, oh, golly, how dull. Well, it appears dull. However, we knew that the next section couldn't do anything until we were finished with what we had done.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: And it had to be correct. It had to be fast. It wasn't sitting there just with one thing, you know, one sheet of numbers all day. We were working from 8:00 to 4:00 --

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: -- with maybe a half an hour out for a meal. As soon as one was finished, we would raise our hand. The officer, the Watch Officer would take it. And it would go on into the next section.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: So what happened with that? We don't know.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: I have no idea. Except at -- just before I was -- just before I left and I was separated from the Navy, the last day that I was at Nebraska Avenue and in the office -- we always had a

British liaison officer work with us. He was British Army. And he was just the nicest person. And all the time I worked on JN-25 he worked on it. And so when the group of us girls were leaving to go, forever, he said, would you like to see a message in the clear? Of course, this was after the war.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: And we said, yes. Oh, yes. Well, we picked it up. And we looked at it. Well, you would have to be, number one, you would have to be a Seaman to know because it's naval.

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: It has to do with ships.

J.L: Navy Yard. Yeah.

M.D: And where they are going and which port they are going to and at what speed. Well, we said, thank you very much.

J.L: But it was nice to see the end result of your efforts?

M.D: It was nice to see the end results. Yes.

J.L: Absolutely.

M.D: And we were told -- by this time we had a Harvard man and an MIT man who had worked very hard for quite a long time. And I carpoled with him. A nice young man. And we had a computer. And the computer would do our work, that we might take a week to do, in something like 17 minutes.

J.L: Wow. This is when now? This is --

M.D: This is by the end of the war.

J.L.: Okay. Using punch cards or something?

M.D: Using punch cards. Yes.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: Because one of my roommates that I -- when I lived off base and had an apartment -- one of my roommates was a machine operator for the punch cards.

Otra entrevistadora: Barbara, when you were doing the codes for the weather --

M.D: Yes.

Otra entrevistadora: -- was that somebody deciding what the weather was in Washington for the ships?

M.D: No. Weather then was secret, because we didn't have what we have now with TV. I was amazed the first time I ever saw someone standing over in Iraq saying it's cloudy. Well, that

was secret. But, no. Our job, when we were sent over there from JN-25, was to do a ten-year survey of weather for three naval bases. Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and --

J.L: There was a third target.

M.D: -- Yokohama. Yes. And so it would give them an idea of what to expect.

J.L: Yes.

M.D: The one thing that I did in my research -- find out that when we had -- when they went into Midway, we had compromised JN-25. Then in the Marianas we had a Japanese -- and I got this from history books -- we had these -- this Japanese Admiral who decided that since we had evidently put some military on Saipan, Saipan was north. We had Tinian. And then we had Guam. And, of course, we wanted all these islands back. He had spread his -- risky -- and he had spread his Navy quite far and quite spread out. And it seems that we could give the people on these islands -- the people who were planning on going ashore or were ashore -- we could give them the information. We could give them the intelligence that we had found out from JN-25 that this was his plan. And he was -- the Japanese lost decidedly. And then, of course, I went in -- I was up on Connecticut Avenue one day, July 3rd I remember, I walked in to get a newspaper. And headlines were: The Third Marine Division was the first Division into Guam. Well, my future husband was in the Third Marine Division. And I have wondered if our work on JN-25 had helped them --

J.L: I'm sure it did.

M.D: -- in their effort.

J.L: Then Admiral Yamamoto was --

M.D: Yes.

J.L: Tell me about that.

M.D: Well, he was, of course, the architect for the raid on Pearl Harbor and all of that. And he was killed when he took his airplane from one place to another. And we wondered at the time if that was the reason we were given that unit citation.

J.L: That was the result of your deciphering the code. That is in the history books.

M.D: That would have been JN-25. Right. Yes.

J.L: Okay. So the war is ending?

M.D: Yes. And, of course, the number of points that you got and that you received, it was the amount of time you were in, the work you were doing -- well, mostly it was the amount of time you were in -- you would be discharge or separated. And fortunately for us the Navy did a

great job at the place of separation by taking us through all of the benefits that we would be able to receive, as far as medical. And there were other thing, too, that went along. And I don't know if the GI Bill was in tact at that point. But they said that there was something in the process that Congress was thinking about. And so there was a lot that they told us that we could do. And also they told us how to handle the secret part. Because we could not tell any employer what we had been doing. So it boiled down to us being clerks. File clerks.

J.L: Oh, so that's what you said?

M.D: That's right.

J.L: You had to tell them something.

M.D: Or you had to tell them something. That's right.

J.L: So how long were you doing the -- working on the JN-25? The code?

M.D.: Yes. About a year and a half.

J.L: A year and a half?

M.D: I would say almost two years.

J.L: Okay. And where were you when Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed in August of '45?

M.D: I'm sorry. I didn't hear you.

J.L: In August of '45 when Hiroshima was bombed --

M.D: I was working with the meteorologists. I was working on weather.

J.L: You were on the weather side?

M.D: Yes. Because I have a feeling that when they bombed Japan that a lot of our weather information that we had accumulated was part of the intelligence that went into all of that planning.

J.L: Okay. Well, that's exciting. It's exciting that you were involved, I guess. How did you feel about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

M.D: Thank God. The war is going to be over. All of our men are not going to have to try to invade Japan. And how many millions we might have lost.

J.L: Right.

M.D: We thanked God that the United States was able to do what they could do in that respect. And this was jubilation. We had a wonderful support from citizens. People couldn't do enough for us. If I took a train -- I can remember going home for Christmas, but I had to be back the next day. So I had to take the train on Christmas Day from Hartford to Washington.

We were invited into the dining car. They have a Christmas dinner on the railroad. And people were always wonderful. Yes. And afterwards when I traveled to Normandy in about 2003, the people of Normandy couldn't do enough for three of us who traveled together. My friend, who had worked with me on Nebraska Avenue, and her husband, who had been in the Air Force in Europe, and myself, as soon as they found out at this little museum in Normandy -- one of the little towns there -- that we were veterans -- they wouldn't let us pay or anything.

J.L: How wonderful.

M.D: And the motels we stayed in there. Everything around. And, of course, I visited so many of the graves. I visited the grave where Patton was buried. I visited the graves in Normandy. And then I visited -- well, I was on a tour and we were going up from Nice up the River Rhone, I believe. I think it was the Rhone. But we took some of these ship -- river ships -- up the Rhine and the Rhone. And I know I did both rivers, so I'm not sure which one it was. But I think it was the Rhine. And on the way up we were asked if there were any veterans on the bus. And so a number of us raised our hand. And we stopped at a cemetery in France where some of our boys were buried, because at that time it was all male. And they had a lovely ceremony there. The grave had a little chapel associated with it. And it was so beautifully kept. And I understand that all the American cemeteries in the European countries -- the United States owns the land that the cemeteries are on. And they are all under the supervision of Americans but local people work there. And every single one that I visited was so beautifully kept. And to look across acres of crosses and Stars of David -- very few women. Maybe some nurses. But it's just awe inspiring.

J.L: Well, it's nice that you had visited that and to see that. And to be thanked by people.

M.D: Oh, yes. And I went into the dugouts where they had the Maginot Line.

J.L: Oh. Okay.

M.D: And I was able to stand up with my head --

J.L: Looking out at the water?

M.D: -- out, looking out at the water. Right. Yes.

J.L: At the Atlantic Wall looking out on the Atlantic.

M.D: And that's when I was in Normandy.

J.L: Normandy. Yeah. Yeah. How wonderful. Okay. So then you got -- you met this guy that came home from the Third Marines?

M.D: Yes. And two years later we were married.

J.L: Yeah.

M.D: And we have -- we were blessed with six beautiful children. Five girls and a boy. And I have lot in the military. I have one granddaughter-in-law who is now in Iraq.

J.L: Oh, my.

M.D: Yes. And her husband, my grandson, was just given a Hero's Medal. He was -- he is stationed at MacDill outside of Tampa Florida. And he was at one of the gas stations on base, and he saw the helicopter come overhead. And this man was supposed to jump from the helicopter, but at a good height. And he was high enough to use a parachute. And as the man came down, he saw that he was in trouble because the wind was carrying him away from land. And the man was coming in the water. And Sean threw his jacket over the link fence -- where probably there was wire across it.

J.L: Sure.

M.D: Leapt over. And another fellow -- another Air Force man -- followed him right over the fence. And the two of them went right into the water to rescue the man. Unfortunately -- this was a colonel and he was working for the SEALs -- and they worked and worked and the boys just could not untangle him. And the fellow drowned. But the boys had to go -- that were underwater so long -- had to be taken to the hospital and all. But they were given -- each given a medal. And they wear the medal -- not a ribbon -- but it's one of those awards that carries the medal. But the man's wife was present at the ceremony. And my grandson had to say a few words. And he said that he was so sorry that it wasn't a true rescue. But he said, this man made it possible for me to know what I could do under those circumstances. And I thank him for that.

J.L: Nice words.

M.D: That just --

J.L: Yes.

M.D: And I have a grandson that graduated from Coast Guard Academy.

J.L: Are they nearby, these grandchildren and these six children of yours? Or are they scattered around the country?

M.D: Yes. They are scattered around the country. Yes. I have a daughter who was an officer in the Army.

J.L: Lots to talk about at family gatherings?

M.D: Yes. We have a lot of respect for the military. Yes. And he pray very hard every day for

the troops who are working so hard now to do what they are doing in such terrible, terrible terrain.

J.L: It's a different kind of war, I think. But it's still -- it still requires the brave people to be part of it.

M.D: That's right.

J.L: Wow. Well, it's -- how are we doing here? Can you think of anything else?

M.D: Well, I think that's my story.

J.L: And a wonderful story it is.

M.D I really have gotten off on a lot of tangents here.

J.L: No. No. This is -- Barbara, thank you. Thank you from Central Connecticut State University. And the Library of Congress thanks you. It has been a pleasure and an honor to interview you here today. Mary Barbara Brennan Dannaher.

M.D: Thank you, Jim. Unfortunately, when I was baptized Mary Barbara Brennan, my family opted to call me Barbara because they thought Mary Barbara was a little long. And so the Barbara is there, but however, legally, it is Mary. And in the service it was Mary B. Brennan.

J.L: Okay.

M.D: But I like the Mary Barbara because at least people recognize, at this point, that I do have, you know, another name besides Mary.

J.L: Well, we'll get the record straight.

M.D: Good. Very good. Yes. And I think I mentioned the fact that I was a Specialist (Q)(CR) First Class when I was separated from the Navy.

J.L: Okay. Well, thank you.

M.D: Well, thank you, Jim. I appreciate it. And I just think it's wonderful that you are able to do so much for the veterans.

J.L: Well, I enjoyed it very much.

M.D: Thank you.

Transcripción no. 19

Martha Kidd

WAVES

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Fecha de la entrevista: No especificado

Duración: No especificado

Nombre: Martha E. Butcha Kidd

Lugar de nacimiento: Pensilvania, Estados Unidos

Lugar de origen: California, Estados Unidos

Género: Femenino

Raza: Blanca

Guerra o conflicto: Guerra Mundial, 1939-1945

Estado: Veterana

Fechas de servicio: 1942-1945

Entrada en el servicio: Enlistada

Rama de servicio: WAVES (Navy Women's Reserve)

Ubicación de servicio: Hunter College, Bronx, Nueva York; Norman, Oklahoma; Pensacola, Florida; Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

Rango mayor: Aviation Machinist's Mate First Class

Prisionera de guerra: No

Entrevistadora: Katrina Burlason

Colaboradora: Katrina Burlason

Transcriptora: Katrina F. Burlason

Afiliación/Organización colaboradora: National Court Reporters Association (NCRA)

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Transcripción

Entrevistadora Katrina F. Burlason: This is Katie Burlason, Period 5. And would you state your name?

Martha Kidd: Marty -- Martha Kidd.

K. F. B: And what is your birth date?

M. K: 9/16/22.

K. F. B: Thanks. Did you come from a big family?

M. K: Um-hmm. I was the oldest of eight.

K. F. B: What did your parents do for a living?

M. K: My father was a coal miner. [She said that her parents were first-generation immigrants from Czechoslovakia.]

K. F. B: And what did your mom do?

M. K: My mom was a mother.

K. F. B: Did she work at any point during the war or after the war?

M. K: No, she didn't. She worked during the war. She worked rolling bandages for the Red Cross.

K. F. B: Okay. Very nice. And did your family have any political views that you know of? Were they staunch anything?

M. K: Democrats.

K.F. B: Democrats?

M. K: Um-hmm.

K. F. B: And religious views?

M. K: Yes, religious.

K. F. B: Okay. And where were you during the war, what was your location? What were you doing?

M. K: Well, in 1941 was Pearl Harbor, right?

K. F. B: Right.

M. K: So I was still home, and I was working at a cleaning shop in Denor, Pennsylvania. And I heard about the WAVES, so I decided to join the WAVES. And I left in February of '43, but I had joined on my birthday in '42.

K. F. B: What does WAVES stand for?

M. K: Women's Auxiliary Volunteer Emergency Services.

K. F. B: Interesting. So during the war you were at about what ages?

M. K: Twenty. I had to be 20 to join.

K. F. B: Okay. How did your world change with the onset of the war, the beginning?

M. K: I left home. And I guess the biggest change was that immediately after enlisting, I had to go to Hunter College, New York. Then from there I went to my training, aircraft mechanic's training, in Norman, Oklahoma. And from there I went to Pensacola, Florida. And from Pensacola, Florida, to Hawaii, and back home to Pennsylvania.

Katrina F. Burlason: Okay. In addition to your serving, did any of your family members serve in the war?

M. K: They were all younger, so they were not -- they didn't meet the requirement.

K. F. B: Okay. How about your dad, did your dad --

M. K: No.

K. F. B: He was a coal miner?

M. K: Yes, he was.

K. F. B: Okay. Classmates or friends?

M. K: If they did, I didn't know about it.

K. F. B: Okay. What did you think of FDR?

M. K: I liked FDR. I really liked him. My father was a staunch Democrat, so he loved him. As far as my mother, I'd say she liked him, too.

K. F. B: Before the war, what education level -- how far did you get in school?

M. K: High school.

K. F. B: Did you have any further education after the war?

M. K: No.

K. F. B: No. Did any of your family or friends that you know of work during the war that was different than before the war?

M. K: Some of my sisters worked in defense plants. One went to Ohio. One went to Philadelphia. And that's the way they served. And after the war, everybody started getting married. That was more important.

K. F. B: Did you ever work after you were married?

M.K: Yes, I did, after I came to California.

K. F. B: Okay. Did, like, the movies or the music change with the war?

Martha E. Kidd: If it did -- Should I keep talking?

K. F. B: Go ahead.

M. K: After the war, of course we were into the Fifties, you know. And that music, to me, was just great. It was really good. I didn't have too much experience with, like, the Forties, except going to dances.

K.F. B: Did you like going to dances?

M. K: Yes.

K. F. B: All the time?

M. K: That's how I met my husband, yeah.

K. F. B: Wow.

M. K: Actually, I met him under an airplane.

K. F. B: Okay. Okay. How old were you when you met him?

M. E. K: Twenty.

K. F. B: Twenty?

M. K: I'm sorry, no. I was 22.

K. F. B: Okay. And you dated for how long before you got married?

M. K: Just a year.

K. F. B: Just a year? Wow. Did the war affect -- well, obviously it affected who you chose to be your husband, but --

M. K: He was a sailor.

K. F. B: He was a sailor. Did it affect how you chose to raise your children?

M. K: Strange you would ask that question because I was just discussing it with a friend of mine today. I think it had a lot to do with how I raised my children, yes. And they probably would tell you yes, it made a difference.

K. F. B: Can you elaborate on that?

M. K: Well, I think the training we received in the military could only, you know, color the way we were raising our children.

K. F. B: Right.

M. K: My children were so close together that it was kind of a defense and I raised them with more discipline probably than normal.

K. F. B: How about rationing? The war started right -- well, not right, but soon after the Depression had ended. And did it seem different than then?

M. K: I had to rely on the letters that my mother wrote me while I was in the Service. And it was difficult for her because we had so many children. There were five -- six of us, and they had difficulty getting gas coupons for my father. He had a car, so he would take six men to work every morning.

K. F. B: Wow.

M. K: And he had difficulty getting gasoline ration coupons.

K. F. B: They couldn't, like, combine anything? They didn't get them because they didn't have a car, the men he rode with?

M. K: No. You had to have a car to get gasoline rations.

K. F. B: Goodness. That makes sense. It just seems unfair.

M. E. K: Uh-huh.

K. F. B: So how about your views on war, then? Of course you served, so you were very much in support of that. Has that changed since then, over time?

M. K: It has. Maybe it's age. Maybe it's experience. And maybe it's that my religious feelings about war have changed. Definitely.

K. F. B: Would you like to elaborate any on that?

M. K: Well, I think that in today's world we solve so many problems -- there are definitely ways of resolving war.

K. F. B: Right.

M. K: And I believe that peace is the answer.

K. F. B: Okay. Very nice. I'm out of questions now, and I'm not sure if I hit my time. So is there anything else you'd like to say about your experience in general?

M. K: Well, one of the reasons I joined the WAVES was to get away from home. There was no place else to go.

K. F. B: Okay.

M. K: There were very few jobs for women. And unless you had money to go to college, there was not much you could do except take a low-paying job.

K. F. B: Right.

M. K: And it was difficult, too, to get into college at that time. It was expensive, and it was hard to get in.

K. F. B: Because men had the slots, you mean? The colleges were mostly for men, do you think?

M. K: Mostly. Mostly. Very few women my age got to go to college. I didn't stay in long enough to get a G.I. grant, to get tuition. Very few women got to go to college at my -- college age. I didn't stay in long enough to get a G.I. grant to go to college, for tuition. So -- You had to serve six years at that time.

K. F. B: And how many years did you serve?

M. K: Three. I only served three. We were put out on points, so we had no choice, really, about staying in. I would have stayed in had I had a choice.

K. F. B: Yeah.

M. K: I would have stayed in. But they put us out on points.

K. F. B: I don't know what that means: Put you out on points.

M. K: You got so many points for how many years you were in, you got so many points for what your grades were when -- when they decided it was time for you to go. And we were in the Emergency Service, you know. Now women are part of the Navy.

K. F. B: Right.

M. K: So they're treated exactly the same as the men. At that time, we were just considered emergency, so they put us out on points.

K. F. B: Thank you. Could you describe what you did every day? What was your job?

M. K: Well, I was an aviation machinist mate. I took 22 weeks of training in Norman, Oklahoma -- red mud, we traipsed through red mud every day in Norman, Oklahoma. Then we went to Pensacola, Florida. That's where I met these roommates of mine. It's like I said, we were flown on an airplane with men, and men were our supervisors. [She stated that their job was to service the machinery, keep things clean, and work on the engines. She also mentioned that she started the propellers for the pilots.]

K. F. B: Right.

M. K: Then we decided -- Bucky and I decided -- my friend Bucky -- that we wanted to go to Hawaii, because there were openings in Hawaii.

K. F. B: Because you wanted to travel?

M. K: Yes. Probably in the back of my mind I thought: I'll never get to travel if I don't go now.

K. F. B: So you volunteered to go to Hawaii?

M. K: Uh-huh. I volunteered. And Bucky and I went to -- on the train to San Francisco. When we got to San Francisco, of course we didn't know anybody. We didn't know for sure where we had to go and everything. So she --

K. F. B: Small-town girls?

M. K: Yes. She was from near Chicago. And she said why don't we just -- You go down to that end of the station and I'll go down to the other, and then we'll come back and meet in the middle. And we acted like we hadn't seen each other before. We dropped our Navy sea bags and just -- Oh, we were so silly. We had a good time with it. Then we got on board a troop ship. We were about three or four decks down. We slept in hammocks.

K. F. B: Nice.

M. K: Oh, I was so sick. Oh, I was sick from the time we left -- They fed us spaghetti that night that we were leaving. And outside of San Francisco, the waves were so high that, you know, we could see way down in. And the ship would go, whoop, way down, and then come back.

K. F. B: It's unnerving, isn't it?

M. K: And of course the boys were having a ball because we were all just green, you know. I spent the whole time with my arms around the commode. I was afraid to --

K. F. B: On the whole trip to Hawaii?

M. K: Every time I could.

K. F. B: Oh, my gosh.

M. K: It was awful. I was so sick and frightened and -- It was silly, because the boys were in charge of us down there, believe it or not. It was not women who were in charge of us. And they would bring us our meals and -- I'll tell you, in my hammock I was spread out like Jesus on the cross. I was scared. And, oh, it was such fun. But anyways, we got there. I don't remember how long it took us, because I didn't care.

K. F. B: I forgot to check if the tape player was playing.

M. K: Did you turn it on?

K. F. B: It's okay. Go ahead, keep talking.

M. K: We got to Hawaii, again. And that's where I met my husband. And I flew on any kind of airplane.

K. F. B: He was a mechanic?

M. K: He was a mechanic. He was transferred to Maui. And I used to fly over to see him, anything I could get to fly. And the officers in the -- They called them chits. And the one guy that took care of the chits put his head down on his arms and would say, "Oh, there she comes again." I would go on anything that would fly. I flew in an airplane that had nothing in it except me. I sat on the bottom of -- well, actually, there were some boxes and me. And then

another time, I went in the water-landing little craft that had the little pontoons that sat down in the bay. That's where I got my engagement ring, was on Maui.

K. F. B: So you got seasick but not air sick?

M. K: It was such a short flight over to Maui.

K. F. B: Very nice. All right. Well, I think I finished my time. I'm going to turn it off now, if I can find out how. Thank you.