



Sheldon

MARY S. GILL  
10200 122nd AVE. N #2002  
LARGO, FL 33773-2149



Addendum: Veterans History Project

My service time during WW II in the WAC counted to my retirement income through the state of Florida when I retired from the Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board in 1986, so besides being an interesting experience where I met the father of my children, my service in the Women's Army Corps contributed to my retirement income.

Once I was polishing doorknobs in between assignments and a dark haired Colonel came along and asked how I liked what I was doing. I replied, "Not much." Very soon after I was transferred to Processing. They were very solicitous of WACs then as they were very interested in recruiting.

I went before the Board for Officer Candidate school and they liked everything about me except for my too soft and diffident voice. They asked me to work on my voice and come back again which I did. I still could not speak up confidently to the Board, so I was rejected.

~~They~~ They were right; at that time I did not have the ego strength required to be an officer although I was very competent at drilling troops during our weekly practice. Now I would make a good officer, but not then. I had had an abusive parental home although with many pluses.

When I first wrote my father that I was going to join the newly formed Womens Army Corp, he wrote back, "It will be all scum." I knew it would not be scum and went anyway. Later on he was proud of my decision among the townfolk. I found a very dedicated middle class group for the most part.

Another humorous incident was the night three dates showed up--one planned and two drop-ins in Daytona Beach. As the others arrived I placed each one behind a pillar to wait while I finished dressing. My roommate, an older woman, called it, "The night the three sailors came!"

MARY S. GILL  
10200 122nd AVE. N #2002  
LARGO, FL 33773-2149

2-Veterans History Project Page 2 of 3

The one time I experienced torture in the Army was the night I pulled Fire Guard duty and had to stay awake all night and every hour make the rounds of all the rooms and all the closets in our G.I.'d hotel.

The next morning our non-com told me to go up and go to bed. What a relief! I was ready to die!

We had chow down to the Clarendon Hotel, long since renamed. Our basic was at the Princess Issena. For recreation we had to go out every day and play silly childish games like Fox and Goose, etc. which I hated but I do see the value of it--to relieve tension if nothing else. Being silly is good for you.

After we had shots for overseas, etc. I was sick and slept all day, at the Ridgewood where we lived when we were assigned to Processing. I had very few sick days while in the service.

I joined the Women's Army Corps and after the year at the WAC Trng Ctr at Daytona Beach, just before I was sent with a contingent to Moore General in NC, the WAC was made a part of the regular Army and we got more benefits but I don't remember what they were.

When I went in, the pay was \$21. a month and was later raised to \$50 a month base pay. We were told if there ever was a mistake in our pay of an over-payment to ignore it and say nothing. I presume that they did not have the staff during war time to deal with such contingencies. I think my pay later as a Tech IV was \$78. a month.

I did a lot of necking but at that time "nice girls" did not have premarital sex. So it was o.k. to tease a guy unmercifully but not ok to give (and take) satisfaction.

Two of my close friends went overseas, to the South Pacific. Kay met and married her true love; the chaplain who married them lent them his hut for their wedding night. Kay made a wedding gown and nightie out of a parachute. They later returned to the states and were divorced as he "ran around", Kay wrote me. Kay Henderson Hershey and Dave.

Sylvia Kleemen sent a photo of being carried piggyback through a lagoon. She later married back in the states and she and her husband came to visit us. I served them prime rib even though we were poor then and lived in a tenement flat. They hadn't built any housing for 20 years before the war and housing was scarce for returning G.I.s and their war brides.

There was some difference from my home town where every home had a spare bedroom and there were many fine Victorian homes to the cramped status in my mother-in-law's five-room tenement where six people lived and worked during the war years. We added two adults and baby Shelley.

After I was married and became pregnant there was the little matter of being discharged from the service and settling down to being a married woman. My G.I. husband and I lived in a little cottage about a mile from camp. Our baby, Shelley, was born at Moore General Hospital and we bought her home to our little cottage. Captain Robert Dacus of Greenville SC delivered her one dark night. My new in-laws sent a layette from CT.

Before my discharge, Captain Chase was reluctant to let me go. I had to go in and show him the safety pin holding my skirt together before he took action.

To be married one was supposed to get permission from one's company commander, but we didn't; we were afraid they would refuse. Ted and I wondered how we would be received when we got back from our three-day pass to Greenville SC. Everyone was very congratulatory and came up and shook our hands. Ted's friend Bassett had borrowed a car and driven us down.

In 1983 I attended a library conference in New Orleans and had a reunion with my old Army friend, roommate and benefactor Staff Sgt. Lauro Ourso. She and her second husband came and picked me up and took me to dinner at Angie's if memory serves me correctly.

I had remembered Ourso as being a fun person with a delightful sense of humor, but there was none of this at our reunion dinner. She was very sober and serious, almost solemn at this dinner. She and her husband were involved with many veterans organizations and activities as well as other civic ACTIVITIES.

They both suffered those terrible night leg cramps many people have in their later years. Ourso was quite a few years older than I; in the service she had been thirty-ish whereas I was 20-something. She had been involved in retail work before the war, hence she was assigned in the service to be Captain Pflaumner's assistant at the Processing warehouse where we worked in the WAC.

Many women in the WAC at that time went in because their husbands were in the service and they thought they were helping their husbands as well as the country when they went in. One was our supply sergeant in one place. She was closer to middle age than most of us. But we were not a bunch of teeny-boppers by any means. Most of us had given up good jobs to go in.

Incidentally, my parents received a monthly check due to my service as long as I was inside. When I got home my father showed me a whole bunch of checks that arrived after my discharge; I sent them back of course.

--End of this addendum--

MARY S. GILL  
10200 122nd AVE. N #2002  
LARGO, FL 33773-2149

*Mary S. Gill*