

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE SPARS

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OF THE  
SPARS

NO. 75  
EVELYN COHEN

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
1999

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NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND  
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INTERVIEWEE: EVELYN COHEN  
INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK  
SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF THE SPARS  
DATE: APRIL 15, 1999

EMC: This is the first oral history interview with Evelyn Cohen who joined the SPARS in 1943. The interview is taking place at her home in Warwick and today's date is April 15, 1999. Evelyn, I'm very glad that you were able to give me some time for the interview this morning on your career in the SPARS during World War II.

EC: My pleasure.

EMC: I'd like to begin the interview by asking where you were born and when you were born?

EC: Brockton, Massachusetts, September 19, 1919.

EMC: What did your father do for a living?

EC: What everybody in Brockton did -- worked in the shoe factory.

EMC: Oh, that's right. Yes, it was a big area...

EC: Brockton was a big shoe city at that time.

EMC: Did your mother work or stay home?

EC: My mother worked later on in years, but when we were small she was always at home.

EMC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

EC: Two brothers and two sisters.

EMC: Did you spend your growing up years in Brockton?

EC: Yes.

EMC: When did you graduate from high school?

EC: 1937.

EMC: What did you decide to do after that?

EC: It took me six months to get a job, from Brockton to Boston. That was through pull for \$10.00 a week and when I got a \$2.00 raise I thought I was "Miss Rich".

EMC: What were you doing in Boston?

EC: I worked for lawyers. I traveled back and forth from Brockton every day. You have to carpool with somebody who had a car. A brand new Chevy was \$600. I never had \$600 for a car. Later on, your next

car was \$900.00. We didn't have the six -- forget the \$900.00. We paid a \$1.50 a week for carfare.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Well, this was during the Depression.

EC: Yes. I gave my mother \$5.00 and \$1.50 for carfare -- I had \$3.50 for myself and baby-sat for the rest.

EMC: So you were a very busy person.

EC: Oh, yes. I baby-sat at night to buy clothes.

EMC: Yes. Things were cheaper then, but still...

EC: For \$10.00 you got a dress, shoes, a hat, a bag, and either the gloves or the hat waited because that was another dollar.

EMC: It's amazing when you think of the changes today. Did your family have any military connections at all?

EC: No.

EMC: Were any of your friends or relatives in the service at the beginning of the war?

EC: My brother was.

EMC: And what was he in, what branch?

EC: He was in the Army. He was at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed.

EMC: Oh, was he?

EC: Yes, but they did not know they were being bombed. They thought it was maneuvers.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sake.

EC: So, he had joined before December 7, 1941?

EC: Right, yes.

EMC: That's interesting. What was your reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

EC: I was at a bridal shower that night at my sister-in-law's in Dorchester, Mass. and naturally, we were all shocked.

EMC: Yes, it was very, very shocking. Did you keep up with the news about the war before you enlisted?

EC: Probably because of my brother and Pearl Harbor.

EMC: You must have been very concerned about him when that happened.

EC: Absolutely.

EMC: Did you make contact immediately?

EC: Yes. As a matter of fact I even have the telegram here. "I'm O.K. Don't worry."

EMC: That's great, because you would be worried if someone were there that you knew. Well, you decided to join the SPARS in March, 1943, I believe.

EC: May.

EMC: Oh, May of '43.

EC: Well, I decided before, but I went into service on May 18, 1943.

EMC: Right. Exactly. Why did you decide to join the military?

EC: I was married for a very short time when my husband was killed. He was a Merchant Mariner here in New England. We were married just five months. We were together just nine weeks, and that's why I felt that I... my mother even called a cousin of mine in New York to try to talk me out of it, but I was determined that this was what I wanted, and I did it. I was working for lawyers in Boston at the time.

EMC: Still -- the same job that you had.

EC: No. Another law firm.

EMC: Now, was he in a wartime area when this happened?

EC: He was off the coast of Iceland when his ship was bombed.

EMC: Oh, his ship was torpedoed or bombed. For heaven's sakes. That must have been a terrible, terrible shock to you.

EC: It was.

EMC: Because of that you felt you wanted to participate. So would you say patriotism was a motive?

EC: Absolutely.

EMC: What was attractive about the Coast Guard vis-a-vis the other services?

EC: That's one thing I cannot remember why I chose -- maybe they had their interviews that particular day when I went into Boston. I really don't remember.

EMC: So your parents, your mother, at least, was kind of concerned about your enlisting, but you were over the age to require any permission, so you could enlist without her.

EC: Yes, I was 23.

EMC: So, did you go to Boston to Causeway Street to enlist?

EC: Yes.

EMC: What procedures did you have to follow to enlist? Do you remember?



EC: I know we had to take written tests and then we had to take physicals.

EMC: I assume you had to wait a while before you were accepted.

EC: Right, and then finally the letter came.

EMC: Yes, telling you you were accepted. Was there any publicity about your joining the SPARS in the local papers?

EC: Absolutely. Number one, my girlfriend was a newspaper reporter, but in a city like Brockton, if you breathe it was in the paper.

EMC: Right. The local papers at that time were chock full of local news, having tea parties, you know, or whatever was there. Well, you were all set to go, and where did you report to initially?

EC: In Boston.

EMC: Oh, you reported to Boston. Were you sworn in there?

EC: Yes, and then we went by train to New York to Hunter College.

EMC: That was the training unit. I assume you went with a group?

EC: Oh, yes.

EMC: Of both WAVES and SPARS?

EC: Just SPARS.

EMC: Just SPARS? Oh, you traveled all together. Had you ever been to New York City before?

EC: Yes. I was 15 years old. I went with my brother and two relatives to a wedding. When we crossed the line into Connecticut, because I was minor, we were stopped by the police. We had to get out of the car and I had to tell how each one was related to me individually to prove that we were all related.

EMC: For heaven's sakes. That would never happen today.

EC: No kidding!

EMC: But anyway, I assume you had never seen Hunter College before.

EC: No, never.

EMC: Can you describe your initial impression of the college?

EC: Well, we were all in awe of this. There were apartment houses. There were six to a room at the time. I'll never forget my first meal - - the one thing I hate -- liver -- and this is what I left home for, and then you had to dunk your trays into a barrel of water to put all the droppings and clean the tray.

EMC: Oh really, and you were eating on tin trays, weren't you?

EC: On tin trays, absolutely.

EMC: That must have been quite a change. Did they give you your uniforms initially?

EC: Yes.

EMC: And can you tell me what the uniform was like? You were there-- it must have been late spring.

EC: Navy blue suits, just like the WAVES, except we had the Coast Guard insignia or patch, and the Coast Guard pins.

EMC: Yes, to differentiate you. I assume you roomed with all SPARS.

EC: Right. We were just SPARS.

EMC: Kept together. Were you kept together in the same building and isolated or separated from the WAVES?

EC: No, just SPARS. We were the last group of SPARS.

EMC: To be trained at Hunter?

EC: Yes, we were the second to leave. One group left before us and we left two weeks later to go to Florida, so we were the second group there.

EMC: Oh, I see, O.K. Do you remember what your reaction was to the marching and drilling? Did you like it or ...

EC: It was fun. If anybody passed out you would just ignore it completely. They would be taken care of. In Florida it was hot and naturally no air conditioning in those days -- full uniform and white cotton gloves. Girls passed out, one after another, because we had to be in full uniform. They said they would be taken care of. Oh, and at Hunter, the Marines trained us, and when we got our shots, they deliberately made us use the arm that we got the shot. The second or third time they thought they had the right arm but they didn't, so that day we enjoyed, but they were tough on us.

EMC: Yes, they were tough on you. Do you remember what kind of classes you took and your reaction to the classes? Did you find it easy, difficult, challenging?

EC: No, I don't think there was much difficulty there. Mostly it was classes learning about the Coast Guard. Then when we were in Florida we were going to Yeoman School. I had Pitman Shorthand and they only taught Gregg. They wanted me to learn Gregg which would have been miserable, so what they did was give me a job in the photograph unit. I used to type up all the cards for people who, for the girls and fellas, had their pictures taken. That was my job.

EMC: O.K. Did you adjust easily to the military life at Hunter?

EC: Yes, absolutely.

EMC: Did you ever have any time off at Hunter to see the sights?

EC: Not at Hunter, no. We had time off in Florida. I was supposed to go visit a relative in Miami for the weekend, but the previous weekend

the first group went out and I guess there were a few girls who got a little bit drunk, as they say, and our weekend was canceled.

EMC: Oh, that's too bad you had to pay for the others' transgressions. Did anything amusing or noteworthy happen during your eight weeks training period at Hunter?

EC: Amusing or entertaining?

EMC: Yes, or interesting.

EC: No, in Florida yes, but there I don't remember.

EMC: Have you kept in contact with the roommates that you roomed with at Hunter?

EC: Absolutely, all of them.

EMC: That's amazing.

EC: Oh, yes. Christmas we'd get cards. I'd send out about 50 cards, to the girls I was in service with, on Christmas.

EMC: That's amazing.

EC: Every year a gang of us usually get together. As a matter of fact I spoke to one of them in Massachusetts just the other night -- two of them at different ends of Massachusetts. Oh, absolutely, we've kept in touch over the years.

EMC: Oh, that's amazing. Well, the Coast Guard, the SPARS were a smaller service than the Navy. The Navy had 85,000 at peak, you know, but the SPARS were less. Well, when you were at Hunter did you have a chance to see anyone famous like Mildred MacAfee Horton?

EC: Madame Chang Kai Chek.

EMC: Oh, yes. She was quite a figure in those days.

EC: Right, absolutely.

EMC: What did she come to Hunter for?

EC: To speak to us. I don't remember what she spoke about, but it was a thrill meeting her.

EMC: Oh, it must've been.

EC: I even have a photograph of her when she spoke.

EMC: Oh, that's fantastic, and Mildred MacAfee Horton was there too.

EC: She was Navy.

EMC: Right. Was Dorothy Stratton ever there -- the head of the SPARS?

EC: I don't remember. I never met Dorothy Stratton until our 50th Coast Guard reunion in Washington DC. As a matter of fact, she just turned 100 years old, and I'm waiting for someone to send me her address so I can send her a card.

EMC: Now, is she from Rhode Island?

EC: No. She is from West Lafayette, Indiana.

EMC: Oh, O.K., yes. That's fantastic. When you graduated from Hunter did you express an interest in the kind of billet you wanted to be put into?

EC: No, no.

EMC: They just assigned you then.

EC: They just assigned us. After we finished Florida they asked us where we would like to go.

EMC: O.K., very good. Well, you were posted next in Florida, to West Palm Beach. Why were you going there?

EC: That's when they stopped sending the SPARS to Hunter. That became just Navy WAVES and Palm Beach, Florida was for SPARS.

EMC: Now, I assume you finished your initial boot camp training at Hunter.

EC: At Hunter, right.

EMC: And then you were sent to West Palm Beach. Now, was that for further training?

EC: Yes, the Yeoman's School.

EMC: The Yeoman's School, O.K., because that was going to be your rating. Did you have any time off between Hunter and West Palm Beach?

EC: No. I went straight to Florida.

EMC: You went straight down there? Did you go by train and with other SPARS?

EC: Absolutely.

EMC: Do you remember the trip?

EC: I sure do, because we got to some southern state, and there was a little black kid selling watermelon. I guess we chipped in ten or fifteen cents apiece and he got a watermelon for us and we had a ball eating it. It was going through Georgia and I never knew such slums existed, how people lived down there years ago. It was pathetic.

EMC: Yes, very, very different.

EC: Rags for curtains, no windows in some of the places. They were just sheds, how people lived.

EMC: Yes, exactly. Now, did you have a Pullman car there or did you have to sit up during the night?

EC: No, we slept during the night.



EMC: But it must have been kind of hot and dusty.

EC: Well, when you're young you don't notice those things.

EMC: Yes, no air conditioning, as you said, in the South, in those days. When you got to West Palm you were domiciled in rather plush quarters, weren't you?

EC: It was the Biltmore Hotel.

EMC: Now that was famous, is famous.

EC: Not the only one. The other is the famous one. Naturally, we had no air conditioning, but we all had nice rooms and it was fun. We really .. I have to say that we had a wonderful time because we had a wonderful group of girls, which was the important thing.

EMC: Right. Now how many roommates did you have in West Palm?

EC: In West Palm there were six to a room, but Rosetta Furey and I were the two shortest ones, so we were the last two. To this day we argue about who's taller. I say I'm "this much taller." So Rosetta and I had a room; there were six beds for the two of us. Inspection was Saturday morning, so Friday night we made our bed. We slept on the empty mattresses, because we had so much work to do before the inspection crew came on.

EMC: Oh, yes. Did you pass the "white glove inspection?"

EC: All except one time. We washed the window sills with Bon Ami, and it rained and left a powder and they came by and they wiped the sill with their white gloves, and it was white powder from the Bon Ami. They said it was dust. When I tell you the tears just rolled down my eyes, because we worked so hard.

EMC: Oh, what a shame. What happens when you don't pass?

EC: Nothing. They just give you a notice.

EMC: Oh, so you're not restricted or anything, demerits or whatever? That is a shame. How long was your training at West Palm?

EC: June, July and August.

EMC: A good three months.

EC: A wonderful three months with no air conditioning.

EMC: What did you do for recreation during this time frame?

EC: On weekends we could go out. We went to the different places around there. A lot of the girls were real drinkers. They went to the bars and clubs, but I never drank anyway, so we went to the movies and things like that.

EMC: Did you ever go to and USOs, the USO canteens?

EC: No, I never went to the USO. I was married and I had lost my husband, so the USO was not for me.

EMC: Right. You were not interested in socializing at that point in time. Did you go to the beach at all?

EC: We went to the beach. It was right down the street .. well, we used to march .. it was right down the street from the hotel. There was a pool and the beach. When you went into the pool, it was the most unrefreshing thing, it was like getting into a hot tub, so we walked over to the beach which was right there. .

EMC: That's good. Did you ever meet anybody of interest, any celebrities down there?

EC: In Florida? I really don't remember.

EMC: Do you remember what kind of classes you took for the Yeoman training?

EC: Like I said, the girls took secretarial courses, and most of them took shorthand, where they had Gregg instead of Pitman. I worked with the photographers when they had that class, and then there were also classes about the Coast Guard, naturally.

EMC: Were there any military bases around West Palm, Coast Guard bases or anything?

EC: I don't think so.

EMC: So you were really the only ones there that were military. When you finished your training where were you assigned?

EC: The Merchant Marine unit here in New York City. I was there for about two and a half years.

EMC: Now did you request that?

EC: I requested either New York or California -- California first and New York second. I got New York.

EMC: Of course, your second choice. You were in the same unit that your husband was in, weren't you?

EC: No, he was in the Merchant Marine. The Merchant Marine Hearing Unit was the one, when the ships were bombed, we wrote reports on that. That was my job.

EMC: Right. Where was that located in New York?

EC: Forty two Broadway, and we lived at the Embassy Hotel at West Seventieth and Broadway.

EMC: Was that taken over by the SPARS?

EC: Taken over, but they had to keep the civilian help. We got clean towels every day. We just had to make our beds. We had wonderful meals because the civilian cooks were kept there, so we had a very good deal.

EMC: Oh yes, that sounds great. So you were involved in helping type these reports, I presume.

EC: Yes, they would dictate to us in shorthand and then we would type the reports.

EMC: Do you remember how many SPARS there were in your office?

EC: Oh, I would say there were 40 to 50 anyway.

EMC: That was a huge contingent.

EC: Yes, it was a big office.

EMC: And you had a supervisor, who was a Coast Guard officer, I presume.

EC: Yes.

EMC: Did you find the work interesting?

EC: Very interesting.

EMC: Did you have to work five days a week and weekends off, or were there rotating ...

EC: Yes, five days a week, nine to five.

EMC: How were you treated by your superiors?

EC: Very well -- never had a problem.

EMC: No harassment or anything?

EC: No, none at all.

EMC: Well, it was a different time then.

EC: That's for sure.

EMC: What did you like about this assignment?

EC: It was very, very interesting because each report that you did was completely different and they were a wonderful group in the office. The head of the SPARS was a civilian, so she gave us our assignments.

EMC: Oh, that's interesting.

EC: She was civil service.

EMC: Right. Was there anything you didn't like about the assignment?

EC: No, it was very interesting.

EMC: Did anything interesting or amusing happen in this two and a half year time frame in New York City?

EC: Well, we saw every Broadway show, I think, for 50 cents.

EMC: Fantastic.

EC: One thing that really bothered me was, one night, most of the girls had seen a movie that I wanted to see and I went by myself. Of

course, we paid 50 cents when other people had to pay probably \$1.00 at the time, and a woman said to me, "you girls get away with murder getting half price," and I remember my answer to her. I said, "I hope you never lose what I have lost," and I just went home that night and cried my heart out. To think that people could be so .... when they don't know, for a lousy 50 cents.

EMC: Right. I often ask the ladies that I interview if they ever had any interaction with the civilians, and what the response of the civilians were to them.

EC: There was just the one time. No, that was the only time that I ever, ever had a problem in the service.

EMC: Usually they were pretty well treated if they were met on the street by people. Well, you know, a lot of the girls that were in New York say that New York offered a lot of opportunities for them, as you mentioned -- cut prices to the shows and movies and the like, and there was a lot to do.

EC: We probably went to five movies a week.

EMC: Oh, really?

EC: Oh, yes. That was our entertainment.

EMC: Did you enjoy living in New York?

EC: At the time, yes. I wouldn't live there now if they gave me an apartment rent-free.

EMC: Was there any pressure in the billet at all that you had?

EC: No, we had a wonderful bunch of girls.

EMC: Were you able to survive on your pay?

EC: Absolutely.

EMC: Did you send any money home?

EC: No, that I didn't have to do.

EMC: Did you keep up with news about the war during this time?

EC: Absolutely.

EMC: Did you write letters to your parents or friends regarding your SPAR experience

EC: Yes.

EMC: Do you have any of these?

EC: Letters that I sent to them? No.

EMC: That would be a very good record of your time frame. Well, when VJ Day came around in August, 1945, what was your reaction?



EC: What was my reaction? I can still picture it. I was at the window crying because of my husband, but then I said ... you know, you say "why me?" and I said to myself, "if it hadn't been me it would've been somebody else." That was my attitude at the time. We went to Times Square and we went to Saint Patrick's church, and that place was packed. Then being Jewish -- a bunch of us were Jewish -- I was the only one Jewish in my group -- went to a temple. It was a very thrilling and emotional thing. I really was, it really was.

EMC: The streets must have been packed.

EC: Oh, there was no room for a hat. It was jammed.

EMC: Yes, it was jammed, and of course, there was the famous picture from New York City of the sailor and the girl which appeared in *Life* Magazine. So, you were I assume, happy about the end of the war.

EC: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

EMC: What was the highest rate that you achieved in the Coast Guard?

EC: Yeoman Second Class.

EMC: Do you remember what your pay was?

EC: For a Yeoman Second Class, ninety six a month.

EMC: That was not too bad in those days.

EC: Yes, but some of the girls were always broke. They put their entire check into the bank and take out just \$5.00 and then complain they couldn't get along. They had to take out another \$5.00. We got along financially.

EMC: You might even have saved some money. You were still in New York when, I assume, you were discharged. When was that? The war was over in August, '45.

EC: To the day? February 4, 1946.

EMC: So you stayed on after the war ended?

EC: Yes.

EMC: But even though there weren't any ships being attacked and bombed after that ...

EC: February 4th, 1946.

EMC: What were you doing from August 15th through early February when you were discharged? Were you still in the same office?

EC: Oh, yes.

EMC: Because there weren't any ships being attacked at that time.

EC: No, but there were reports and work to be done.

EMC: Did you receive any medals when you were discharged?

EC: Only the Good Conduct Medal and length of duty and things like that.

EMC: Did they prepare you in any way for your return to civilian life?

EC: I don't think so. I mean, to me it made no difference because I had a job to go back to.

EMC: Oh, you were going back to the job in Boston.

EC: Right

EMC: How did you feel about leaving the Coast Guard?

EC: It was emotional saying good-bye to all the girls, but, as I say, I was very lucky in one respect, because most of them were from around Boston and Massachusetts. We kept in touch and we have all these years.

EMC: That's amazing that you were with people that were local. Would you have stayed in the Coast Guard if you had the opportunity to?

EC: Probably not, for one reason, because I think we ... Some of the girls did continue and stayed in.

EMC: Well, some were extended, but the legislation to admit women in the service was passed in '48.

EC: '48. Well, unless these girls went back then -- that could be.

EMC: Yes, that could be, but some of them were extended because they were needed. Did you feel that the SPARS had a strong sense of esprit de corps?

EC: Absolutely.

EMC: Did you know of anyone who was disciplined or discharged from the SPARS for any infraction?

EC: No.

EMC: So the quality ... can you comment on the quality of the women who went in?

EC: Tops. I would say most of them were tops, and I'm sure there were others that I didn't know, but the ones that we were friendly with were all tops.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Did you think the SPARS was a smoothly run organization?

EC: Yes, absolutely.

EMC: Because women's units were newly organized and formed. Did the SPAR experience change or redirect your life in any way? Did it point you in any new direction?

EC: No, I don't think so. As I say, I had a job to go back to, so that made no difference as far as I was concerned.

EMC: Did the war make you more independent and self-reliant?

EC: I would say so.

EMC: Do you feel it broadened your horizons?

EC: Absolutely. No doubt about that.

EMC: The travel ...

EC: And the experience of meeting new people.

EMC: Yes, that important, that you wouldn't have had if you'd stayed in a small town. Do you feel that what women were expected to do and accomplish changed when the war was over? Do you think women were more motivated to go to work after the war to pursue a career in some field?

EC: Oh, I would imagine.

EMC: Now you mentioned that you maintained a lot of service friendships when the war was over and you've still kept in contact with these people. Did you attend any SPAR reunions after the war?

EC: I think the only one I did not attend was the one in Florida. I guess, whether my children were too small at the time or what, I don't know. I've been to New Orleans. I've been to St. Louis. I've been to Portland, Oregon, New York, Boston after one, and Washington, DC for our 50th.

EMC: Well, that's great. So that was 1992, the 50th?

EC: '92. The reason I know that is, I still have the pin from the reunion in '82 and that was the 40th.

EMC: Did you meet anybody there that you knew from your time in the SPARS?

EC: Oh, yes.

EMC: That's great. Do you belong to any military organizations of women?

EC: Yes, the Ocean State Unit 118.

EMC: That's the good old Ocean State WAVES. Are you affiliated with WAVES National at all?

EC: Yes, oh yes. We have to.

EMC: What would you say is the significance in your Coast Guard career for you and your life? What was its importance to you and its significance if you look back at it?

EC: Well, I suppose the main thing is the reason I went in in the first place and that was my husband.

EMC: To do your part for the war effort.

EC: Yes.

EMC: Where did you settle after the war?

EC: In Brockton, Mass.

EMC: Back to Brockton and you said you went back to your job. How long did you continue in that position with the law firm?

EC: I got married eight years later ...

EMC: So that would be around 1950.

EC: 1950, O.K., and we lived in Brockton almost a year, and my husband got a job in Rhode Island that paid \$75.00 a week, which was a big jump from \$40 a week that he made there. I was pregnant when we moved to Rhode Island and I didn't work until my youngest was in junior high, but I was home when he got home from school.

EMC: Can you tell me how old your children are. Do you have boys, girls or whatever?

EC: I have a girl and two boys. My daughter will be 48 in June, my son will be 46 in July, and my youngest was 43 last week.

EMC: And you said they're all scattered in different states, that they're not here. You did go back to work, I assume, and where did you work in Rhode Island?

EC: I worked for Milhender Distributing Company. My brother in law is a CPA and he asked me to do a six week inventory job. Well, I stayed

there three years. Then I left there and I worked for an insurance man for eleven years until I had to retire when my husband had a stroke.

EMC: So you did about fourteen years of work. Did you ever talk about your SPAR days to your children?

EC: Yes.

EMC: Were any of your children inspired to join the service?

EC: No. I guess none were, thank God.

EMC: Would you encourage anyone, any woman, to join the service today?

EC: Like I said before, when we went there were a bunch of wonderful girls. What the situation is today with younger kids I have no idea, so I can't answer that question.

EMC: Do you have any other comments or experiences to add?

EC: When we were in Florida, we were the honor company, and the honor company could go out a few hours before the others. Well, we were not to remove our uniforms until the honor company left the floor. Well, one Saturday they left the floor and my bunk mate -- we had bunks at the time -- took our jackets off to get ready to go out. We heard the company come back in, on the floor. Well, I grabbed a jacket and she grabbed a jacket. I was about five feet and a quarter inch at the time and Mary Lou was about five eight and I grabbed her jacket. I had no idea what I was doing. I couldn't imagine why I couldn't get the



sleeves up until I looked at her with the sleeves up to her elbows practically.

EMC: Were you too late for the ...

EC: No, no, we changed in time. Once, there were rumors that girls were stealing from other girls. One night -- it was during the night on a Saturday night --and I thought I heard somebody in the room, and I was facing the wall. To this day I don't know if somebody was in there or if it was my imagination but I was facing the wall, and when I tell you I never turned one eighth of an inch, but I could feel the blood sloshing back and forth in my body. I didn't move until Sunday morning when they came to wake the girls up for church. But, as I say, I never knew if there was somebody in there because I never did turn around.

EMC: Well, there must have been guards down at the entry, weren't there?

EC: These are girls that were supposedly stealing from different rooms, so a girl could get up during the night and go to another room.

EMC: Right, you didn't lock your rooms then.

EC: No, I don't even know if we had doors that had to be locked.

EMC: Oh, isn't that something. That's kind of scary. Your experiences sound very interesting, very positive.

EC: It was, no ifs, ands, or buts.

EMC: That's good. The fact that you still have kept in contact with these people means that there was quite a bond established.

EC: There was, absolutely. As a matter of fact, Rosetta and I and her husband get together for pizza and play cards.

EMC: Well, thank you very much, Evelyn, for the interview. We will get it transcribed, edited and back to you.

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