NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE MARINES (WR)

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ELIZABETH KLATT

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

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INTERVIEWEE: ELIZABETH KLATT

INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF THE MARINES (WR)

DATE: NOVEMBER 19, 2001

EMC: This is the first oral history interview with Elizabeth Klatt at her home at 104 Harvest Hill Road in Kensington, Connecticut. Today's date is November 19, 2001. My name is Evelyn Cherpak. I am the Curator at the Naval Historical Collection. Elizabeth, I'm so pleased that you have given me some time this afternoon to interview you about your career in the Marines during World War II. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you a few background questions. The first is, where were you born and when were you born?

EK: I was born in New Britain General Hospital, New Britain, Connecticut, June 8, 1920.

EMC: And what did your father do for a living?

EK: My father was a policeman in Plainville. We lived in Plainville at the time.

EMC: Plainville, Connecticut.

EK: That is correct. And they didn't have police cars, but he had a patrol where he walked through town. In those years, there wasn't much need for a policeman.

EMC: That's true. What did your mother do?

EK: My mother was a registered nurse. She worked in Bristol Hospital, Bristol, Connecticut.

EMC: Oh, so you had a working mother.

EK: She worked nights; my father worked days. He stayed with us nights, and she would work on a twelve-hour shift, seven at night to seven in the morning.

EMC: That's amazing! Did you have any brothers or sisters?

EK: I had two sisters and one brother.

EMC: Elizabeth, where did you spend your growing-up years?

EK: We lived in Plainville, Connecticut, on Newton Avenue. I went to the Linden Street School and then to Plainville High School.

EMC: And did you attend college? And if so, where?

EK: I attended Pembroke College in Brown University from 1938 to 1942.

EMC: And what did you major in there?

EK: I majored in English and minored in French.

EMC: Well, you must have been an honor student at Plainville to get in to Pembroke. It was very difficult to be admitted in those days.

EK: Well, I did very well, but I tried very hard.

EMC: Oh, well, that's good. Did your family have any military connections at all?

EK: My father was in World War I in the National Guard, and my mother was a Red Cross nurse in World War I.

EMC: That's fantastic!

EK: My father was sent to Arizona with the National Guard troops to guard the Mexican border in 1915--or '14.

EMC: Yes. Right. There was trouble down there. Exactly. Oh, isn't that interesting! Now, those are exciting stories, I'm sure, that they would have had for us. Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

EK: Yes, I do. I was going to college. It was on a Sunday. We were eating in the cafeteria at the school, and we were having lunch. The announcement came over the P.A. system, and they had a radio connected so we could listen to President Roosevelt talking about the attack.

EMC: And what was your reaction to it?

EK: Well, of course at first we were horrified to think that such a thing could have happened. And we got very upset and worried about what would be the next step.

EMC: Exactly. Just as we have in the recent events in this country. Well, when did you graduate from college?

EK: I graduated on May 18, 1942.

EMC: And that was kind of early.

EK: Yes, it was early. Normally, the college graduation was held

in June. But because of the war, everything was accelerated and expedited, and we graduated a month early.

EMC: And they did that for what reason? Not for the women.

EK: Well, mostly to give the men a chance to help out with the war effort. And some of them did join in the service after they graduated.

EMC: Oh, sure.

EK: But they let them finish their schooling.

EMC: Well, that was good. That was great. Did you keep up with news about the war before you enlisted, after December 7, 1941?

EK: Of course in those years we had radio. We did listen to accounts of it on the radio, but it was nowhere near as in-depth or as complete as what we now get on TV. It would be an occasional report of a battle here and there, and the newspapers would carry the stories. We would see it if we went to the theater. They had Pathé News, and they would show some of the events in the war on the Pathé News in the theaters.

EMC: Oh, yes. Yes, I remember that. Well, what did you decide to do after you graduated in '42?

EK: Well, first of all, I did major in English, minored in French, but I wasn't really qualified to follow a career with those majors. So I was looking primarily for a job to pay back some of my college loans and just to get on my feet. There were openings far and wide because the men were leaving for the service. They were looking for women to take jobs that men normally held. One of them was with the National Fire Insurance Company in Hartford. I was hired as a map-maker in a department there, where previously it would take a man to bring these hugs maps out in great big books to plot the policy numbers on the streets and the houses of policyholders. When they hired women to do it, it took two girls to handle the books because they were so heavy.

EMC: Right. I bet.

EK: That is where I worked after I graduated from college.

EMC: Did you enjoy that job?

EK: I thought it was very interesting, but it wasn't something that I wanted to follow as a career.

EMC: That was just a temporary expedient. Well, how did you happen to hear about the Marines?

EK: Well, one day when our boss was putting a lot of pressure on us, and we felt that we were being used to the fullest, we told that we were going to give him a fright and tell him that we were leaving. My girlfriend and I went to the post office on our lunch break, and got a lot of material about women in the service. We were going to look at it in front of him in the afternoon to get a rise out of him, which we did. But the more I looked at it and the more I studied it, the more I decided that is what I wanted to do.

EMC: Oh, isn't that interesting! And it must have seemed like an exciting opportunity for you.

EK: Well, I thought at first that it was my patriotic duty to do something. And I was moved by that. And second of all, there were so many different places that they would train you; and I thought maybe if I could get some kind of training, I would have a career opportunity when I was discharged.

EMC: Well, that's very good.

EK: That was another reason I thought I might want to go.

EMC: Well, when did you enlist in the Marines?

EK: I enlisted in--I think it was in March, but I wasn't called to active duty until April.

EMC: And that's '43.

EK: Of '43. That is correct.

EMC: And where did you enlist? Where did you sign up?

EK: I had to go to New York. When I enlisted, they set up interviews, and we went to New York, other people and myself who had shown an interest. Then we had to go through several tests. Some of them were mental, some of them were physical. And then we had doctors who gave us a physical exam. We had to go through a certain routine to see if we were fit to be in the service. And we did that all in one day in New York.

EMC: That was a busy day for you then. Well, now you've taken your tests, your follow-up procedures and the physical exams. When were you finally sworn in?

EK: It was in April of 1943 that I was called to active duty. The only place they were training women Marines at the time was at Hunter College in New York. They had no facilities especially designated for women Marines. So they used the college that was already there. We went there for six weeks for boot camp

training.

EMC: Just to double back a tad. I wanted to ask you how your parents felt about your joining the Marines? Because this is pretty unusual for a woman in 1943.

EK: Well, my parents did not approve of my joining. They felt that the reputation of women in the service was not the greatest, and they did not want me to be a part of that. My father did not object as much, but my mother was most unhappy when I joined the service.

EMC: But you did anyway.

EK: Well, she wasn't so adamant for me not go. She just did not approve of my enlisting.

EMC: Now, were the other siblings in the military?

EK: My brother was in the Army. My sisters were not. But both my sisters' husbands were in the service. My younger sister's husband was in the Navy. My older sister's husband was in the Army. And my brother was in the Army.

EMC: Oh, so you had a lot of representatives from your family. Now, was there anything distinctive about your joining the

Marines from Plainville?

EK: Well, there weren't any other women in town at the time who had shown an interest in joining. I was the first in our area to show an interest in the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps was the last organization for women to be established. The others, the WACS and WAVES, the Coast Guard, had already been in service. So it was not unusual that I'd be the first Marine (WR), because I was early in the inception of the Corps to take an active interest.

EMC: Right. They just really were organized in February '43. So you were the first woman Marine from Plainville to join, which is very interesting. Now, was there any publicity about your joining in the newspapers?

EK: Well, there was a small article in the newspaper indicating that I was the first women in the area to join the Corps.

EMC: And that would've been in the New Britain Herald?

EK: The New Britain Herald, exactly. That's where it was.

EMC: Oh, very good. Well, you're off to basic training. Did you go by yourself from Plainville by train?

EK: Yes, I did.

EMC: You did.

EK: We traveled mostly by train in those days, more so even than bus. And of course we would not even consider traveling by plane. So everything was by train.

EMC: So you went down there alone to Hunter College. Well, what was your first impression of this large institution in the Bronx, New York?

EK: It was a big place. New York was not familiar to me, so I had a lot to learn. But there were a great many people who were in my platoon and my battalion, and there were many support groups. We didn't have time, really, to think about what we were doing. They had a schedule that would get us up at six a.m. and keep us going 'til eight or nine at night. And by then we were so tired we just went to bed. I really didn't have much time to analyze the situation. They kept us going all day long.

EMC: Right. They certainly did. Now, were you bailiwicked only with Marines in your dorm situation?

EK: In Hunter College, there were only women Marines. The WAVES were in other departments. When I went to radio school, we were

mixed with the WAVES and the Marines, but at Hunter it was just our battalion, a battalion of women Marines.

EMC: Oh, okay. So you were domiciled together.

EK: Correct. Our platoon number was 8224.

EMC: And you all took classes together?

EK: We had classes, drills, airplane identification classes, and we had physical exercise activities. We had to go through barricades and obstacle courses outside in the fields. They wanted us to be physically prepared as well as mentally prepared. We had many classes teaching us what our responsibilities were in the war and what we were supposed to do, how we were to carry ourselves. We learned a lot about military protocol, for example, saluting. They told us it was very important to salute all officers. Once I forgot to salute an officer, and I had to stand and salute him 100 times.

EMC: Oh, where was this?

EK: On the streets of New York.

EMC: Oh, really! Oh, he was so mean.

EK: And after that I was so worried about forgetting to salute that I was even saluting the doormen at the hotels.

EMC: Yes, I know. Some of the women have said that to me, too. Were you issued the Marine uniform when you went to Hunter?

EK: Yes.

EMC: Can you describe that?

EK: We had two or three different sets of uniforms. One was fatigues. They were pretty similar to dungarees, and the jackets were similar to dungarees. They buttoned down the front. We called those fatigues. Then our regular uniforms were green skirts and khaki shirts with ties. And, of course, we had the Marine hat which we wore. We had to wear brown gloves when we went into town. Everyone was issued the same kind of brown oxford shoes. They always gave us a half size bigger than our feet, because they said too many people had trouble with their feet from marching and the strenuous activity, so that our shoes always fit well, and we never had any problems with them bothering us.

EMC: Now, you had to march to class, didn't you?

EK: We marched everywhere. They would call us to muster. When

our platoon was supposed to assemble, they would holler over a loudspeaker. We had to come downstairs, and if we were coming down too slow, they would holler, "On the double! On the double!" And if there were some stragglers, they would holler to them, "On the triple!" and that meant hurry. Then we'd line up with our platoon. In our platoon you were lined up according to height. The tallest girls were in the front, and because I was short, I was always in the back.

EMC: You'd think they'd put the tallest in the back.

EK: No, the tallest ones were in the front, and the shortest ones were in the back, and that's how we drilled. And sometimes we would be called to march in reverse. If you were out on the field drilling, and they hollered "Reverse march!" you'd turn around and then the small people would be in the front and the tall people would be in the back. One day we were marching out on the field, and it was a windy day, and the three of us who were leading the platoon across the field didn't hear the order to reverse. We kept marching and marching, and the whole platoon had turned around and had gone back without us.

EMC: Oh, what a riot! Oh, the joys of marching in the Marines.

EK: It was not always easy to hear outside when they were giving the commands.

EMC: Oh, I'm sure.

EK: We had drill every day.

EMC: Oh, you did?

EK: Every day, part of the day we had drill. We learned all the commands necessary to march in parades and to march around the field. We got pretty good at it after a while.

EMC: Didn't you have a regimental review on Saturdays?

EK: Yes, we did. We did. We had to go by all (we called them the "gold braid") all the officers. And the ones who ran the organizations would sit up on the bleachers, and we would go marching by them. And, of course, we had to be on our best behavior. We had dress inspection before we would take part in those marches, and they would look at our shoes and make sure our neckties were tied properly. They would look us over before they would let us go in the review.

EMC: Now, did you have a white-glove inspection, too, of the rooms?

EK: Yes, we did. They would come into our barracks with white

gloves on. That is true. And they would run their finger across the top of the locker or the bed or any other place--there wasn't much furniture in there. There were the bunk beds and footlockers and we had a stand-up locker, which they would investigate to see if it was sparkling clean. One time they found a broom straw in the crack of the floor, and they restricted us for the whole weekend.

EMC: Isn't that awful! Isn't that something. They were really strict!

EK: They were very strict.

EMC: Did you have to agree with the other gals that you lived with who would do the cleaning? Or how did you--?

EK: No. We were assigned chores. We all had to keep our own area clean: our bunks, under the bunks, the footlockers, and our lockers were our responsibility. Then there were other areas like the bathrooms (we called them heads; that's the old Navy term), and there were people who were assigned to clean the heads. That duty changed often. It was not always the same people. The lounges were assigned to different people. Sometimes if you weren't doing what you were supposed to be doing, you would get a demerit. And if you built up enough demerits, then you would draw head duty or you would draw cleaning duty that wasn't desirable.

EMC: Oh, absolutely!

EK: That was part of the punishment.

EMC: Did you ever get a demerit?

EK: Yes, I did one day.

EMC: Oh, you did?

EK: I got a demerit once (this was not at boot camp; this was when I was at California). We were on the night shift, and we would come home and go to bed in the morning. Usually inspection was at ten o'clock in the morning. On this particular day I didn't know whether or not they had had inspection. I got up, and I did not make my bunk. I was downstairs doing something, and the inspection was late. Because my bunk was not made, I got a demerit.

EMC: Oh, dear.

EK: But I didn't get any punishment. You had to accrue so many demerits before they would give you some kind of restriction.

EMC: Sure, sure. Well, that's good. Glad you only got one.

EK: It wasn't too bad.

EMC: Did you ever participate in any extracurricular activities at Hunter? Because I know there was a newspaper that was produced every six weeks by each class. And also there were singing platoons and choruses and the like. And I wonder if you experienced any of that.

EK: I don't remember having the opportunity to do that. It may have existed, but I have no recollection whatsoever of any activities. When we were at boot camp, we were so programmed; they told us what to do every hour. Then they would come around at night and have bed check. And we had practically no free time at all. We did have an hour or two at night where we could do what we pleased. And usually that time we would go into the lounge and listen to the radio. But I don't remember any other activities, especially at boot camp.

EMC: Okay. A few of the WAVES were involved in the Conning Tower, which was the newspaper. And one gal was involved in a singing club.

EK: Was that at boot camp or later?

EMC: Yes, at Hunter.

EK: Oh. I don't remember. I don't remember reading that at all. But then, of course, it could have been there, and I was not aware of it.

EMC: Well, how many women did you live with at Hunter? How many were in your cubicle?

EK: Oh, dear, I don't know. Was it four or eight in a room? I have a picture of the platoon.

EMC: No, I mean in the cubicle. Were you with four?

EK: There were eight of us. There were eight of us in a room. We had four bunk beds. They would come around at nine o'clock for bed check, and you had to be in your bed, not up or not going to the bathroom or not doing anything but in your bunk at nine o'clock.

EMC: Lights out then, pretty soon.

EK: Right. Of course some of us had flashlights, and we would try to write letters under the blankets.

EMC: Of course. Did you keep in contact with any of these women that you bunked with at Hunter?

EK: I don't think I kept in contact with the ones that I bunked with. As a matter of fact, I don't even remember who they were. But women from radio school and from California, three or four of them anyway, I have kept in touch with all through these years. Three of them I still write to; mostly at Christmastime we exchange cards and letters and tell each other what's been going on. Of course now with e-mail, I can keep in touch with them.

EMC: Right. That's great. Well, how did you react to your six weeks at Hunter? How did you feel about the boot camp and military discipline?

EK: At first, I thought they were too strict with us. But now I realize it was probably good training. We were not exactly happy with the routine we had because we had so little time to ourselves. Some of the training we had, we didn't think we would need. But, you see, that was our innocent judgment and not really an important way to look at it. But we were not too happy about it. They were very strict, and they chewed us out a lot.

EMC: Oh, really?

EK: I remember one day we were marching in drill, and it was only practice. I sneezed, and the corporal that was giving us instructions hollered at me, "Front and center!" When I got up

there, he said, "Who gave you permission to sneeze?"

EMC: What did you say?

EK: Well, of course, I didn't answer because I didn't know what to say. But I just thought they were overdoing it a little bit at the time. But, you know, it was good for us. We probably needed it, because we had never had any kind of instruction like that before, where every move you made was structured and programmed. You couldn't do anything on your own, let alone think.

EMC: Right. That's quite a baptism by fire, so to speak. Did you ever have any limited time off at Hunter to go into New York City?

EK: We had weekend passes, but we could not stay overnight. And I had friends who had come to New York from Plainville to visit with me, and I could be with them through the day. But if they stayed at a hotel overnight, I had to go back to the college. They did not give us any overnight leave through those six weeks. But we had a day pass occasionally on a weekend, which we meant we could, you know, take the subway or the bus and go downtown and go to a movie or something like that.

EMC: Sure. At least you had a little time away from the campus if you were lucky enough to get a weekend pass. Did your parents

ever come down?

EK: No, they did not.

EMC: Did the Marines or the administration at Hunter provide you with any entertainment during that six-week period?

EK: I don't think we had anything that was an enjoyable experience for recreation at all. I remember, even though it was late April and early May, that we were drilling in the streets, and it was very, very hot. And we didn't have anything to drink. So we complained to the corporal who was in charge of us. And he made a complaint to some higher-ups. And the next thing we know, they took a plain garden hose, and connected it up to a fire hydrant, and punctured holes along the hose; and when we were thirsty, we got down on the ground and drank from the garden hose because that was all the water that was available to us.

EMC: How primitive! You know, what a comedy of errors there. Well, Betty, when you were at Hunter, were you tested? Were you given aptitude tests at all for your specialty?

EK: Yes. We had quite a few tests. We had written tests, and then we had oral tests, and we had interviews. At that time we didn't realize it, but they were screening us for whatever jobs we were going to have to do in the service. Of course at the end

of the six weeks' training, then they got us all together, and they called off the names of people that were going to different areas and what jobs that they would be doing. But they screened us very carefully with all kinds of tests--aptitude tests, intelligent tests, and then oral interviews.

EMC: And what were you selected for?

EK: I was selected to go to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, to radio school. We had the barracks that the women from Miami U. used to have. They turned them over to the Marine Corps, and they used them to house us. We would go to school every day, and we learned--we had various classes all day long. Mostly we were taking Morse Code. But we were also learning how to repair radios and how to identify aircraft. We were learning how to operate the ECM machine, which is an electro-coding Machine, how to work with strip code, and how to decode messages. We had a Hague machine which was a German encoding and decoding machine, and we had to learn how to use that. But most of our time was spent on watch taking Morse Code.

EMC: Oh, okay. So you'd receive a message in Morse Code, is that it? And then you'd transcribe it?

EK: We first took it in pencil. Then after a while we would take it on the typewriter because it was faster. I was the only one in

my platoon who had no had typing in high school, so it was a big disadvantage. They set up special classes for me at night. And when they all had their happy hour, six to eight, I was in the lab learning how to type.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes. Well, just to double back a sec, when you left Hunter, did you have any time off, or did you go directly to radio school?

EK: No. We had time to go home. I think we went home for a week and then went to radio school.

EMC: Okay.

EK: And it was interesting because after they gave us our assignments, a lot of the girls went to the phone; they were calling their parents. When one of the girls called her mother and said she was going to go to Miami U., Oxford, Ohio, the operator butted in and said, "If anyone else on this phone is giving a military destination, they will be cut off."

EMC: Oh.

EK: They were obviously monitoring the phone calls. But they did give us time to go home between radio school at Miami.

EMC: Did your parents' attitude change at all after that first six weeks?

EK: Well, of course they were always glad when I came home. They didn't really say much after I was in the service about it. I think they got used to the idea, and I'm sure they didn't mind it as much.

EMC: So off you were to radio school. And how long did you spend there? How long was your course?

EK: I was there from, let's see, when did I go? I think we were there in July, and we stayed until November, the end of November

EMC: Oh, that was quite a training period, four months then, almost.

EK: It was five months, I think, that we were there.

EMC: Oh.

EK: And then we went off to--

EMC: Well, can I just stop and ask you a few questions about the radio school? You gave us the curriculum during that time frame. About how many women attended radio school with you?

EK: Well, there were a lot. Because in the picture that I showed you, that was my battalion.

EMC: Oh, yes.

EK: That was just one battalion. There were several battalions there, and there were also WAVES at Miami U., so we associated with the WAVES a lot. As a matter of fact, many of the WAVES became our good friends. We'd be on a practice radio watch, and when we left, the WAVES would come in. We used to leave messages on the typewriter for the people who would be sitting at the stations that we had. We had an excellent relationship with the WAVES.

EMC: Oh, that's great!

EK: Very, very friendly.

EMC: Now, who were your instructors there? Were they Naval officers?

EK: They were mostly Naval officers, and we had some Marine Corps officers. And, of course, they were people who were very well versed in whatever we had to learn and the Morse Code. We had to get up to a certain point, taking so many words a minute.

It all came in five-letter coded groups. All the material over the Morse Code radio stations would come in five-letter groups. And the five-letter groups would indicate how you should decode the messages. Very interesting.

EMC: Very interesting. Well, it's dots and dashes, isn't it, of some sort?

EK: It is. Dots and dashes come out to be letters. But your five-letter code groups would be like QTRSN would be one group. And that would mean something. You would have your decoding manual that would tell you. The first five letters would always tell you how to decode it: whether you put it in the electro-coding machine, whether you used the strip code, whether you used a Hague machine. It would always tell you how to decode the message.

EMC: Oh, okay.

EK: There were always five-letter groups. The problem was that sometimes there would be a mistake in sending or a mistake in receiving, and you could not always get the message clearly. We spent a good part of our time trying to figure out what the error was so that the message would always be clear to read.

EMC: Isn't that interesting!

EK: It was a very interesting job.

EMC: Was it difficult to learn?

EK: Well, we had to be there several hours a day, and there was absolutely no excuse for missing. I remember one time I had two wisdom teeth pulled, and right after I left the dentist's office, I had to go into this class and take code. They would never let you have an excuse to miss. It was very tedious. And they wanted us to be sure. To this day I can read code when it comes over the radio. Occasionally you'll get a-- You know, RKO in the beginning of the movie, that RKO is always the R, K, and the O in Morse Code. We had learned to detect it whenever we hear it. It stays with you.

EMC: Oh, I bet. Once you learn it, it's there, because it's a challenge, I imagine.

EK: Very interesting.

EMC: Totally out of your previous experience.

EK: Absolutely.

EMC: So you were there for a good four or five months. Did you

make any lasting friendships during that time frame?

EK: Yes, I did. Those are the three or four people with whom I am still friendly; they were ones who were at radio school with me. Two of them live in Michigan, one in Hawaii, and the other girl was from Rhode Island.

EMC: Oh, that's great! That's great! Well, did you have any chance at all there for any socializing or any recreation at all?

EK: Are you talking about boot camp or radio school?

EMC: No, I'm talking about radio school.

EK: Now, at radio school we did have more time to ourselves than we did at boot camp. But we still had a pretty regimented day because we were in classes all day. We had to learn a lot of different things, so they were organized classes. But weekends, generally, we would have a day to ourselves. And we could go to Hamilton, a nearby town. Cincinnati was nearby. We would take the bus into those places and maybe go to a movie or go shopping. Of course we didn't have very much money. But we were free to do what we wished. We just had to have our military pass, and always, always, always in uniform. We never could go anywhere without full uniform.

EMC: Well, when you did go out in Ohio, were you ever stopped by civilians at all? Or did you ever gauge what their reaction was to you as a service woman?

EK: I don't know. I have no recollection of any interaction with the people who lived there. Most of the time when we'd go, we'd go in groups, and we would stay to ourselves. Or if we went in a restaurant, we would stay to ourselves. I don't recall. Now there may have been some reaction. But we were so into what we were doing that I never noticed what the people were thinking about us. They probably were pretty used to service people, because there were an awful lot of them around.

EMC: Oh, really.

EK: Not only at Miami U, but all over the place. There were sailors and women Marines and men in all kinds of branches of the service. So they were pretty used to the military. I don't recall any special reaction at all.

EMC: Did anything unusual or interesting happen when you were at Miami? Anything startling or outstanding that you remember?

EK: Well, I just remember one time we were told that we didn't have liberty and that we were supposed to stay on the base. And some of the girls defied the order and decided they would go into

town to the movies. I did not go. But I heard later on that they thought a few people had left, and they were going to call a surprise inspection. The inspection was supposed to be at six o'clock. I went into town on the bus and routed them all out of the theater and got them back home, so that when the inspection was called, we were all there. And the sergeant in charge of us said, "I could have sworn some of you had left the base."

EMC: Weren't you the good person to do that.

EK: I was just hoping I would get back in time.

EMC: Right.

EK: And it just took them so long to get organized that we were all there. They counted heads, and that was that.

EMC: Oh, that was great.

EK: That was the only sort of interesting thing. Otherwise it was pretty routine, doing your work and just living on the university grounds.

EMC: Well, at the end of this rather lengthy training period, where were you assigned?

EK: I was assigned to Goleta Air Force Station in Santa Barbara, California.

EMC: Now that was a Marine air station.

EK: Yes, it was. It was newly formed in 1943. I don't even remember the month. But we were the first women Marines to be assigned to that station. We went out there in December. Once we got there and we got settled, the rumor was that the men were going to be moved out. The men who had taken the jobs prior to our getting there were going to be moved out. They would not tell anybody when or what time or what day, of course. Everything had to be very secret. But one night after we were there about two weeks, three o'clock in the morning we heard a lot of commotion. Some of the girls in our room were awake in our barracks. There were 500 people to a wing, and we had up-and-down bunks, and we had a lot of roommates because it was all open. There were no small rooms.

EMC: Oh, it was one big room.

EK: There were no small sections. The girls were awake, and they heard the commotion. We looked out the window. It was three o'clock in the morning, and the troops were moving out. So we weren't there more than two or three weeks when they took the men out of the barracks and put them on ships at sea.

EMC: Right. Oh, can I just ask you one question, to double back? Did you go home to Plainville after your training at Miami?

EK: Yes, I did. We had a week off. When we had time off, they would give us what they called chits, and they would allow us to travel. They would give us tickets, and we could go home. They gave us tickets for the train and the bus right to the house so that we did not have to pay for our travel when we went back.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Then you had to head out to California. Did you go by train?

EK: Yes, I did. I wonder if you want me to tape an interesting experience I had.

EMC: Oh, sure. Yes. I always ask people about interesting experiences. Was it a troop train?

EK: No, it was a regular commercial train. From Chicago to Los Angeles they called it the "El Capitan," and it was supposed to be the fastest train at the time. I met people in New York who were going to Goleta with me, and we stopped at Chicago. We were waiting for more women Marines to get on. We were supposed to meet them. Well, there were some women Marines coming into the station, and I was on the train, and there were about five or six

of us from New York who were on the train who had come in from New York. We started to get off, and one of the girls ahead of me said, "Someone should stay here with the purses and the luggage." I said, "Well, all right, I will." So the rest of them, and there were maybe ten or twelve, got off, and they were greeting these girls from Chicago whom they hadn't seen in a week or more. And as they were greeting them, the train pulled out.

EMC: Ohhh!

EK: And there I was with their purses, their luggage, and my face pressed against the window as we're pulling out, and the rest of them are all standing on the platform. Now that is not just a short ride. It was three days and two nights from Chicago to Los Angeles, and I was alone with the luggage. The girls had to go back into the train station and go to some USO place and tell them that they had missed their train. They had to get new orders issued. And they got a sleeper. So that when they traveled at night, they could use the sleeper. And I had to sit up for two nights with all the luggage.

EMC: Right! Oh, no!

EK: When we got to Salt Lake City, their train passed us. We're looking out the window, and I saw all their faces in the window, and they saw me sitting there with all the luggage.

EMC: Oh, that is comic! But it gave you an awful lot of responsibility and inconvenience.

EK: I know. It was funny at the time.

EMC: Yes, it must have been. Was the train rather comfortable? Because some of them were.

EK: Well, we could tilt the seats back.

EMC: Oh, okay.

EK: We had to sleep in the seats on the train usually. This group got the privilege of sleeping in the berths, because they took another train.

EMC: Right. Well, you made it out safe and sound to L.A.

EK: Yes, we did. And they got on the train and picked up all their stuff. But they got there ahead of my train, so they were there waiting.

EMC: Well, that was good. You didn't want to have to be a porter, too.

EK: But they had nothing. They had no money. They had nothing.

EMC: Yes. Because you needed to pay for your food.

EK: But it's an interesting experience. I mean it was quite a while. I'm talking, now, three days, alone on the train.

EMC: Yes, yes. That is, that's a long time when you're on the train. Well, you're settled into your barracks at Goleta Naval Air Station in Santa Barbara, which is a beautiful area. Can you tell me about your duties there as a radio operator?

EK: The radio station on the base was monitored twenty-four hours a day, and they had eight-hour shifts. There were what they called cattle wagons; they were trucks with just long benches in the back, and that's how they transported the girls from the barracks to the radio station, which would have been quite a long walk. It was a big base. They would pick up the watch, and they would go down and relieve the people who were on duty. My watch was a night watch, and we used to go down at night, relieve the girls who were there for the day, and then they would go and we would stay there. I cannot remember the exact hours. I know we were there all night. But I don't know exactly what time we started. I think we were there until seven in the morning. Then at seven the cattle wagon would come and pick us up and take us back. We were the only group allowed to stay in the bunks during

the day because we hadn't slept. So we could sleep until noon or early afternoon and get up and have our free time between then and when we had to go back on watch.

EMC: Well, that really mixed up your eating hours, didn't it?

EK: I know.

EMC: Your mealtimes?

EK: Well, I don't remember ever having a problem. But we did have the night watch. We were responsible for quite a bit. When the payroll would come on the base, if it were late and they couldn't lock it in the administration building, they would bring it down to our building, because it was the only one that was open all night. We had a lot of responsibility, and they constantly had sentries walking around the building. They used to train us as to what materials to destroy should a Japanese sub come ashore and want to know something about our coding and decoding messages. So we went through a lot of training on how to destroy the electrical wheels that were in the ECM machine, and how to get rid of the strips; how to set fire to the files and smash equipment in case ever there was an attack. That used to frighten us a bit because they were so afraid of some kind of a suicide attack. It used to get us a little leery, you know.

EMC: Right, right.

EK: Fortunately for us it never happened.

EMC: Yes, fortunately.

EK: We never had to do that. But they gave us training in that area.

EMC: But you had a lot of messages to decode.

EK: Oh, we had loads of messages. We had five girls on watch at a time, and all of them were on circuits. They had a station in Washington called NSS, the NSS radio station, and that was constantly giving out messages. They had different priorities. O would be Urgent, and then P would be Priority, and D would be Deferred, and R would be Routine. In the code there always would be some clue as to how important the message was. When an urgent message came in, immediately we had to translate it into plain English. After we decoded it, we had to give it to an officer. Ten minutes after we gave it to an officer, the TBF's and Corsairs would be off the base going out to whatever troubled spot there was.

EMC: Wow! The planes would take off.

EK: They would be all ready to go. As soon as we got a message that indicated a problem (they'd give us the latitude and longitude of where they might have seen a Jap sub), we would give that message to the officer. They were always waiting, always waiting for messages. And then they would take right off because they were training pilots on the base. The planes at the time were Corsairs and TBF's, and that's what we were dealing with.

EMC: So it was high priority. And these messages, I assume, were secret?

EK: Oh, yes. All of them were. Well, they're all coded messages and highly secret and confidential. There was sort of a basket on one of the desks; and if someone had trouble decoding a message because it wasn't coming out right, they would put it in this basket. When we had free time, we would work on those messages. There were so many ways in which there could be an error. There could be an error the way it was sent; there could be an error in the way it was typed. It was very, very important that we got them straightened out so the pilots could carry out their responsibilities.

EMC: Oh, absolutely. Yes, you were in kind of a high-pressure job. Did you feel pressured?

EK: Sometimes I did when there were a lot of messages backing

up. We had to really be on the job to get those done, especially if we had trouble decoding. Then we'd have to sit with them a long time and try to figure out what could have possibly made it a difficult message to decode. Where could the error be? Most of them we figured out. It took us a while, but we would do it because that was our training.

EMC: Yes, and you could work with the others, with the group, to do it, so you had help.

EK: Yes. True.

EMC: That sounds very challenging and very interesting.

EK: It was very interesting.

EMC: And something totally different than you were ever exposed to.

EK: That is correct.

EMC: Did you find it easy to work with the other women? Were they nice?

EK: Oh, we were a very close-knit group. I'll tell you what, though. There was a little bit of rivalry among different

departments. Our department was like a team, like a team in a school. All the radio school girls were all friendly because we lived together and we worked together, and we socialized together. And the people in transportation did the same thing or the people who were in the clerking area did the same thing. So all the different groups were very close together. I thought we got along great in our group. We really genuinely liked each other.

EMC: Oh, that's good!

EK: And that was a help.

EMC: Yes, it certainly was a help. Did you have any time for any social activities?

EK: Well, when we were in Santa Barbara, we had a lot more freedom, of course, than we did at radio school. We did have, I think, two nights off a week where we could go into Santa Barbara, and that was our liberty time. We would go in there and either just stay in a hotel or go to the movies or go to a theater, go see a legitimate play, or just whatever was the going thing, just go into town and go to a nice restaurant.

EMC: It's a beautiful town, I hear.

EK: It is. It's a lovely, lovely place.

EMC: And did you like the climate?

EK: I loved the climate. But it was interesting. At Christmastime all the girls from the East bought some kind of a spray at the store to frost all the windows to make it look like Christmas. They were a little homesick for the winter weather.

EMC: Yes, the winter weather. You didn't get that in California, which was nice.

EK: It's a lovely place, though, Santa Barbara. Goleta Air Force Station is no longer there. It's been completely demolished. I have been out to Santa Barbara in recent years and saw the place where it was, and it is no longer there.

EMC: Isn't that something!

EK: They leased the land from Santa Barbara for a period of time and set up all the barracks and so forth. Then, of course, when the war was over, they had no need to keep it.

EMC: Yes. So they demolished these old bases. I'm going to turn the tape over. Now, Betty, when you went out to Goleta Marine Air Force Base in Santa Barbara, how did the men, the Marines, react

to your being there initially?

EK: When we first got out there, there was a contingent of Marines who had just come back from Guadalcanal, and they had been through a lot. They were the worst. They did not want any women on the base. And, of course, they were all what they called GI, and they were for the Corps. We were imposters, and we were imposing on them, and they were not happy that we had arrived. Well, I don't think that lasted very long, and I'm not even sure when it stopped. But the next thing I know, they were dating the women. And eventually many of the men married the women who were on the base. I myself was dating a Marine corporal, and it was great. We became very close to the men, and they were really nice to us. After their initial displeasure, we found that they were really being friendly and pleasant and accepted us. The one thing they didn't like was that we were sending them overseas.

EMC: Well, yes.

EK: But it changed so dramatically that you would have been surprised at the difference in attitude. Once they got to know us by name, it made a big difference.

EMC: Well, you really didn't work with them, did you?

EK: There were some men on our watch. Well, of course, the men

were always in the supervisory positions, and there was a lieutenant, always a lieutenant, who was over the group but did not really take part in the group. He supervised us to see that everything went well. You've heard of the chain of command.

EMC: Of course. We live by that.

EK: Right. In the service you live by the chain of command. So we did work with men and quite closely with them, and especially with the pilots. I remember we got quite close to the pilots, whom they were training. On one deck of the tower where the radio station was, there was what we called the "third deck," and that was where we had communication with the pilots and the tower. Some men would be flying, and they would get sick, and they'd want to land, and they'd have to call special permission. We always had Marine women monitor that deck. This made for a very close relationship between women Marines and the pilots because there was that constant communication for landing and take-off instructions.

EMC: Right. They were the tower people.

EK: Right. We had PBYs, which are huge lined-up planes. The fellow that I was going with at the time was training on a PBY, and a couple of times I went out with him on--

EMC: On the plane?

EK: On the plane when he was doing touch-and-go landings. That was a terrible experience because he was landing and taking off and circling around and landing and taking off again. I became quite ill, and I asked him to land. He said, "I can't. I have to do so many before I can land." So that wasn't very pleasant. But we did get along well with them, I must say. Their attitude changed so completely after we were there awhile, that we were thoroughly accepted by Christmas.

EMC: Oh, that's good. That's quick. Yes, it wasn't too long, because you landed there, I think, in early November.

EK: Yes, that's right.

EMC: So that's good. Did you have an O club there or a chiefs' club?

EK: Yes. Well, you see, I was with the enlisted personnel.

EMC: Yes, a chiefs' club, I should say.

EK: I wanted to apply for OCS, but their quotas were filled. They told me I had a choice of waiting for an opening in OCS or going in as an enlisted. At that point, I wanted to go, I did not

care to wait. So I went in as enlisted. My name came up when I was in California as a possible candidate for OCS. But if you know anything about the hierarchy, the chain of command, by then the enlisted had no use for the officers. And I did not want to be an officer, because I had so identified myself with the enlisted and all my friends were enlisted and the gentleman I was going with was a corporal. So I consequently turned down the assignment to go to OCS. I had the option of going or not going.

EMC: Yes, some of the gals did.

EK: So when I finished my service term, I was a sergeant. That was as far as I went in the ranks.

EMC: Do you remember what your pay was at all?

EK: Yes, I do. When I was discharged, my pay was seventy-eight dollars a month. When I first went in after boot camp, we were getting forty-five dollars a month.

EMC: So that was a....

EK: How come I remember that?

EMC: Well, it's a substantial raise. Did you buy any war bonds? Did they encourage you to buy war bonds?

EK: I don't think I ever bought any. I don't think I ever had any extra money to do that. See, at the same time that I was in the service, I was paying back my college loans.

EMC: Oh, right.

EK: It took a good part of what I was making every month. Of course, I didn't have living expenses. But there were certain things we wanted to buy. At Christmastime we wanted to buy things for our families. So I did not have extra money really. That wasn't a lot of money. If we went anywhere on our own, we had to pay for our transportation. If we were furloughed, we could get the government to pay it. But if we weren't, then we had to pay our own expenses. So that is not a lot of money even in those days, you know.

EMC: No, it isn't. Did you take any trips on your own anywhere? Did you go to Mexico or anything?

EK: I never did that. I did go home. Some of the girls didn't have enough money to go home. But I went home twice from California. But it was a long ride because we had to take the "El Capitan," which was supposed to be the fastest train at the time, from L.A. to Chicago. Then we had to take another train from Chicago to New York, and then I took another train from New York

to Berlin. From Berlin I would take the bus to Plainville, so it was an odyssey. It was a long trip, you know, so we didn't take it often.

EMC: No, no, of course not. Did you ever run into any discipline problems in the Marine Corps? Not you particularly, but did you ever know of anyone who was a discipline problem or was discharged for any reason?

EK: I don't really know of any personally. There were some rumors about some girls who were given an unsatisfactory discharge. But I did not know them personally, and I think the problem was that they were accused of having a lesbian relationship, and they were dismissed. But I did not know them, and I'm only saying it now as a rumor.

EMC: Right.

EK: I don't know how much truth there was to that because they were not in our immediate group.

EMC: Right, right.

EK: Other than that, I do know the men were taken to task a couple of times. They used to try to smuggle liquor onto the base.

EMC: No liquor on the base?

EK: No. They would not allow any liquor on the base. Sometimes the men would tape the bottles to their legs underneath their pants. One man was coming in through the gate one day and clonked his legs together and broke the bottles.

EMC: Oh, dear.

EK: So he was disciplined. But not severely. Another time the men knew there was going to be an inspection, and they took their liquor and went outside and dug a hole and buried it.

EMC: What a riot!

EK: Oh, they used to try to think of all the things they could do to get away with breaking rules. We were on two floors. When the inspection team came in (they used to pull surprise inspections), if we were home upstairs, they would tap code on the pipes downstairs and let us know that the inspection team was coming. Then we would neaten up the areas so we wouldn't be in trouble.

EMC: Oh, they did that when you were in California.

EK: Oh, yes. We had inspections all the time. I'll have to tell you one interesting story. Anyway, we were restricted to barracks once because they thought that our area wasn't neat enough, so our whole floor was restricted, and they did not want us to go off the base on the weekend. But when we were at Goleta, we were right on the shore.

EMC: Oh, you were!

EK: Right on the water. You could walk down to the water. When the tide was out, we could walk down around the fence. So we were very annoyed that they were restricting us to the barracks. We decided we'd take a walk along the beach. We said, "What harm could that be?" So three or four of us went down and walked along the beach. About a mile down the beach, we came upon a portable truck where they were entertaining the troops at the next station. They had an Abbott and Costello movie, and they were showing it on a screen on the back of the truck. It caught our interest, so we stayed. Then they had a cookout; we had hotdogs and hamburgers, and they had various delicious kinds of foods and invited us to stay, so we did. When we went to walk back to get back on the base, the tide had come in, and it was very deep, and we couldn't get through. We couldn't even walk through it, so one of the fellows who was driving a truck said, "Why don't you get in the back of the truck? I have to go back to Goleta." That's where he was going, to the Air Force base. And he said, "I'll

take you through the gate, and we can get you in."

So he put us in the back of the truck--I think there were four or five of us--and he put a blanket over us. We got to the base. (All the Marines called each other "Mac." It was always "Hi, Mac!") We got to the gate, and the sentry there says, "Hey, Mac, what are you hauling?" He says, "Nothing." So the sentry shined the flashlight in the back, and of course we didn't even dare breathe. He didn't see us. So he said to him, "Okay, Mac, go through." So he drove through the gate. He went about a car length, and there were some fellows there who wanted a ride up the hill. One said, "Hey, Mac, you're not carrying anybody. Give us a lift." So they all started piling in the truck on top of us. We got a leg and an elbow, and they were jumping all over us, and they didn't know we were there. And the truck started out.

Well, the sentry came running after us. And he kept saying, "Halt! Halt!" And then he was shooting at the tires of the truck. Well, the truck could go faster than the guy could run, and it got us up to our barracks. We got out and ran into the building. We went into the john and stayed there. Then, because they were going to check there, we stood up on the seats of the john. They came in and looked under, and they didn't see us, and they went all over the building looking for us. Then there was a big poster the next day about these women who were in the base and that they were going to make an effort to find out who they were, and then they would be given severe punishments. And that was the end of that. They never found out who it was.

EMC: They never found out. Thank heavens! Oh, that is a scream.

EK: I tell you, it was scary.

EMC: It was.

EK: They didn't shoot at the people. But they wanted to stop the truck, so they're shooting at the tires. And they really were angry that we did that. But we made it. And I was afraid because I didn't want to lose my stripes. That's the first thing they do is demote you when you violate rules.

EMC: Right.

EK: That wasn't a smart move. But it was fun.

EMC: Yes. Right. Well, people do take chances like that, and when you're young you do, which is interesting. Well, you mentioned, when we were talking prior to the interview, that you went to Hollywood to the canteens there.

EK: Yes.

EMC: That sounds fascinating.

EK: That was great fun. First of all, we had always enjoyed the movies. We didn't always see the people we wanted to see the most, but we did see quite a few of the movie stars. Some of them would come down and work in the canteen. By working they would be passing out refreshments, and some of them would even dance with the men who were there or the women if it happened to be a male star. And it was very, very interesting to go there.

EMC: Who did you see?

EK: I saw Peter Lorre; I saw Sidney Greenstreet; we saw Lucille Ball, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and many others.

EMC: Oh, yes.

EK: It's very hard to remember now because there were a lot more women there. I should have written down the names at the time. If I think about it a long time, I probably can come up with the names of some of them. But there were always notable movie stars there. It was a fun place to be. They always had nice refreshments and dance music and the old bands which we liked. We went there a couple of times, and it was fun. I liked that.

EMC: The stage door canteens.

EK: Yes, it was. It was a fun place to be.

EMC: Well, Hollywood was a little bit of a distance from Santa Barbara, wasn't it?

EK: That's true.

EMC: I thought so.

EK: We didn't go there often, but we did go there.

EMC: Did you have any entertainments on the base, any recreation facilities?

EK: They had movies on the base. We played baseball. The men and women were on the softball team together, and that was fun. We used to play baseball. Some of the girls would go into town and go bowling. The group that I was with had the "Gizmos" as the name of their bowling team. I wasn't a good bowler, but I would go in with them and watch them. There was a girl who was a good friend of mine who used to break all kinds of records. She was an excellent bowler. So we had bowling, and we had baseball. We had movies. I thought we had quite a bit of entertainment. Then, of course, there were a lot of things to do off the base there that we didn't have the advantage of at radio school or boot camp.

EMC: Right, right.

EK: We had a lot more freedom. We could be on our own. I remember once we wanted to go to San Francisco, because it was such an intriguing place to go. So three or four of us decided when we had a weekend pass that we'd go to San Francisco, but none of us had enough money to go on the train. So one girl said, "Don't worry about it." She said, "You go out of the base, and you just start walking, and someone will give you a ride." In those days it was not a bad thing to do. So we didn't bum or do anything like that. We just walked out, and we're walking with suitcases. And the senator from California stopped and picked us up.

EMC: For heaven's sakes!

EK: And said, "Where are you girls going?" We said, "San Francisco." He said, "I'm going there, too."

EMC: Isn't that amazing!

EK: You know that's about five hundred miles. That's a long, long way to San Francisco, and he took us all the way up. We had an interesting time. We had a great time in San Francisco. Then when we were coming home, we didn't have a ride. This man was at a truck stop, and he had a whole load of cabbages. He said, "I don't have much room, but you can ride in the truck with me." So

we had two girls sitting and two girls on their laps, and we were riding in this big truck carrying cabbages. Anyway, that was a fun weekend. I enjoyed that.

EMC: That's an experience, that's for sure. Well, when VJ-Day came around on August 15, 1945, do you remember how you felt and how you celebrated?

EK: Yes, I do remember. First of all, we were excited and delighted. Then we felt sad because then we knew that we no longer would be with our same group. We had been so adjusted to being with this group and going through the routine that the thought of not seeing them anymore saddened us because it was something that we liked. But there was a little excitement about knowing that we were going home and that the war was over. Everybody was very high, and they were exhilarated to think that it finally had come to this. Because we were losing a lot of people from our base.

EMC: Oh, I'm sure.

EK: One of the troops went out. They hadn't been gone a week, and a Japanese kamikaze pilot dove into the ammunition on the ship and blew the whole ship up. Very, very few of them were saved, and those were all of the men whom we had trained. It was a month before we got the report on it, and the people that had

been rescued came back to the base and told us. That was very hard. It was hard to think that so many good young folks were losing their lives, so it made us feel good, to think that the war was over. But then there's a lot of the unknown: What are you going to do now? You know, you're at a loss because you're so indoctrinated with this program, daily routine, that when you don't have that, it's like taking the props out from under you.

EMC: Right. It is. That's for sure. Because you knew what you were doing every day, and you were scheduled to do it. Now you had to make big decisions. Did you celebrate in any specific way? Did you go out?

EK: We didn't do anything in the way of celebration. We were at the base at the time. The group that I was with did not do anything special. We just talked a lot about it, and what we might do, and how long it would be before we would be allowed to leave. It was October when they decided to let us go. Camp Le Jeune, in the meantime, had been established in North Carolina, and they sent us there to be discharged.

EMC: Oh, they did.

EK: So that's where I got my discharge.

EMC: Do you remember, was the discharge process very involved?

EK: Yes, well, it's like the military, everything is a step by step, you know, and six pages of this and ten pages of that, and they had a lot, a lot of paperwork to do. We had to go out to North Carolina, and we stayed there, I think, two or three days. The process was somewhat lengthy. Then, of course, when they finally did release us, they gave us our discharge papers, and they gave us chits for transportation so that we could go home. I remember I was on a train coming north to New York to go to Plainville, and I happened to sit with another Marine on the same train. He was going to Plainville, Connecticut, too, and he said to me, "I'm really from Maine. But when I was in the service, my parents moved to Plainville." He said, "I don't know where I live." I said, "I know where you live." (His name was Perrault, Johnny Perrault), and I knew from the time I had been home, my folks had told me that this French family had moved in this white house on Whiting Street. And that was where Johnny Perrault lived. So I told him on the train, "I'll show you where you live."

EMC: Oh, isn't that something.

EK: Isn't that interesting? We were both going to Plainville, and he happened to be sharing the seat with me.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sake.

EK: Talk about fate, right?

EMC: Yes, that's amazing.

EK: So when we got off the bus, I walked down, I said, "There's your house." It was a white house, and I still know where it is on Whiting Street in Plainville.

EMC: Isn't that something!

EK: I thought that was interesting.

EMC: Well, when you were discharged, did you receive any medals for your service at all?

EK: No, I didn't do anything exemplary to get recognition.

EMC: Well, some of the WAVES were entitled, I guess, if they applied for the American Service Medal and the Victory Medal.

EK: Just because they were overseas?

EMC: No, just for serving.

EK: We never had a chance to go out of the country. The very,

very end of the war they gave us a voluntary option of going to Hawaii for a length of time, and that was the only place they would take us out of the main United States. But at that time I didn't want to extend my service. Even if I went there, I'd be going home shortly, so I did not go. But other than that, the Marines did what they called "stayed stateside."

EMC: Yes. Until about early 1945 the WAVES did, too. Then they were allowed to go abroad.

EK: The WACS went overseas.

EMC: Oh, yes. The WACS did.

EK: And the nurses went overseas.

EMC: Oh, absolutely. But not the WAVES or the SPARS or the Marines.

EK: That's true.

EMC: Did you ever meet Ruth Cheney Streeter, who was the director of the Women Marines?

EK: No, but I heard her speak.

EMC: Oh, you have.

EK: I can't remember the situation now under which we heard her. She was either at our base or someplace near. She was head of the Marine Corps (WR), I know. But I never talked with her personally. I never got to know her. I certainly knew the name.

EMC: Yes. Right. Everybody did. Did the Marine experience change or redirect your life in any way?

EK: That's a hard question to answer.

EMC: It is.

EK: Although when I came home, I did go back to school under the G.I. Bill and became certified to teach, which I had not done before I joined, so that was good. They encouraged us to go to school, and a lot of the people who came home did that. I went to school in Plainville. What I needed mostly was practice teaching and a few education courses, and I took practice teaching at Plainville High School. That's where I went to school myself a few years earlier. It was very interesting, and I was certified. That was a result of my Marine Corps service. They paid for all of my training, my books, my courses, and that was very helpful.

EMC: That was great. Yes, that was helpful.

EK: It was very helpful.

EMC: A lot of the ladies did that who had an interest in advancing their education either through college or graduate school. Did the war and your service in the Marine Corps make you more independent and self-reliant than you were?

EK: I think so. I think so. Because for many years now, prior to my living with Fran, I had lived alone. And you have to learn to be independent. You have to learn to do everything for yourself. I think it does instill that in you because you become very self-reliant, and you don't want to ask anybody for help. If you're in charge of this, you do this, and that's your job, and you do it. That's the kind of training they give you. There's nothing that tells you someone else is going to help you or to ask someone if you need help. It's this is your job, and you do it. And I think it's true. I think it does instill independence in a person.

EMC: Did it broaden your horizons, meeting women from all over the country?

EK: I think so because some of my friends now are from other states, and we have visited through the years. The friend I have in Michigan and I have seen each other every single year since the war. Either she has come here, or I have gone there, and it's

been a weekend or a week. I have been to her son's wedding. It's just a good relationship. She was so thrilled with New England when she came because she had come in the fall when the leaves were colorful, and she also has come in the spring. She just thinks New England is great, because Michigan doesn't have the history that New England does.

EMC: Oh, yes.

EK: So it's been a good relationship.

EMC: That's wonderful.

EK: And we've still carried on.

EMC: That's great. So many of the women did, you know. These friendships were lasting over the years, which is wonderful. Did you join the Women Marines Association, the national association?

EK: Yes, I did. I belong to that. I am a lifetime member of that association. And, periodically, a book comes from them with names and addresses of Marines. I've never been to a convention. It's never been a convenient thing for me to do because it's been a weekend, and there's always been some reason why I haven't gone. But they do have these conventions in some of the huge cities almost every year. They send me all the material. I like the

bulletin that they put out because it has all the latest news and all the chapters and what's going on. It's very interesting. I do belong to that.

EMC: They do a great job. Do you belong to WIMSA, Women in Military Service for America?

EK: No.

EMC: The memorial.

EK: Oh, the memorial in Virginia. Yes, I have sent them a considerable amount of money because they are always saying they need a little donation to get it built. And I do want that to be carried forth. Periodically I have sent them money to help them out with the memorial. I never really called it WIMSA. That's what it is. It's the Women's Memorial in Arlington.

EMC: Exactly. And they have a museum there. I haven't been there, but it was dedicated four years ago, and Al Gore spoke, and some of my WAVES from Rhode Island went.

EK: Is that right?

EMC: Yes, they went to the dedication. Apparently you can register there. You can register your name and your service

affiliation and the like, and there's a museum and an archives. So it's really quite amazing.

EK: Yes, I'd love someday to go down and see that memorial.

EMC: I would, too. I think that would be great.

EK: I don't know if I'll ever have a chance to do that.

EMC: Right. Well, I'll just kind of wrap up your life and career after the war. Where did you settle after the war was over?

EK: When I first came back, I was with my folks in Plainville. That's where I lived when I went to New Britain's Central Connecticut State College and became certified as a teacher. Then when I started teaching, my first job was here in Berlin from 1946 to 1949, and those years I lived home. When I taught in Durham, I moved to an apartment because it was too far to commute. I taught there for three years. Then I went to Japan and taught for a year.

EMC: How exciting! What did you teach?

EK: I taught G.I. children. Sergeants and above were entitled to bring their families to Japan during the Occupation of Japan. They needed schools because they were having people come over

with children of all ages, so they began starting what they called American Dependents' Schools, and they needed teachers. So they were advertising in all the schools for teachers. When I first applied, I applied for Germany because they had many different countries. I couldn't get Germany because it was so popular. There was a long waiting list, so they offered me Japan. My first reaction was I don't want to go to Japan. We were not happy with the Japanese during the war, and I wasn't interested in going. The lady from Boston who called me (It was during the summer. I was spending my summer working for the Welfare Department in Middletown because, you know, in teaching we didn't get a big pay; I had to work summers to supplement my income, so that's where I was working) asked me to go to Japan. I said, no, I didn't care to go.

The lady in Boston called me back, and she said, "Don't hang up. Listen." I was at work when she called. She said, "Go in and talk to your supervisor, and I'm going to call you back at five o'clock." So I said, "All right." So I went in and talked to my supervisor. She said to me, "Look, it's for a year. What can you lose?" She said, "You can take a leave-of-absence from teaching and just go." She said, "I'd do it." She talked me into it. They called me back at five o'clock. She said okay. I had to go up to Boston and be interviewed and processed and so forth. This was in July, and I left in August.

EMC: You had to cancel your contract at school.

EK: Well, I did have to tell them that I was leaving because this is August, and they had to pick up a new teacher. So I left in August of '56 and stayed there until August of '57.

EMC: Did you enjoy it?

EK: There were a lot of interesting things about it. The experience was very, very worthwhile. Of course everyone on our base were military personnel (it was an American base, and it was made up of the Air Force).

EMC: Where was that, by the way?

EK: We were at Johnson Air Force Base right outside of Tokyo.

EMC: Oh.

EK: The base (it was named after a deceased flyer) was called Johnson Air Force Base. And, of course, all our time off was free. It wasn't the way it was in the service. We went to school, and after that we were on our own. We traveled over the whole country of Japan. Every weekend we went somewhere. And, of course, we were getting paid, so we had more money than I had when I was in the service.

EMC: Sure.

EK: Actually I didn't get as much money as I was getting teaching here. But nonetheless it was enough so that we could travel weekends. I would say it was very, very interesting. The older Japanese were not kind to us and did not like us. But the young Japanese people--we were just like anybody else. The government hired maids to run our barracks, and each of us had our own maid who would make our bed, take our clothes to the cleaners, get the mail, do anything that would be helpful. We paid her eight dollars a month, and she worked every day. And they told us not to give them anything or pay them anymore or they'd be getting more than the Japanese school teachers.

EMC: Wow! Isn't that something!

EK: So anyway, that's what I did. After that I came back. I went to see my superintendent to get my job back, and he had been moved from Durham to Deep River, and I liked him real well. So instead of going back to Durham to teach, I went down to Deep River to ask him if he had any jobs in the building. He said to me, "I have one job as a business teacher." I said, "Oh, you know I can't teach business." He said, "Keep one lesson ahead of the kids." I said, "No, I don't want to do that." He said to me, "I'll tell you what I'll do. They're starting to put guidance counselors in different high schools. I'll hire you as a guidance

counselor if you'll go to college and get certified." I said, "Fine." So I took the job without certification with the promise that I would get certified. Then I commuted to Storrs for a few years until I got certified. I also took courses at University of Hartford and became certified in guidance. From Deep River I went to Waterford and taught there. Then my last school was Amity Regional High School in Woodbridge. I taught there sixteen years. Well, actually I didn't teach there. I was guidance director for thirteen counselors.

EMC: Well, you really hopped around then to quite a few different places.

EK: Well, each time I moved it was because I was getting an increase in pay.

EMC: Oh, I see.

EK: It was very hard. Teachers' pay was not good. I retired after thirty-six years in education. I was in administration because I was a guidance director, and I had three schools: two junior highs and a high school. I was paid on the level of the assistant principals. This is in 1982. That salary that I got for twelve months with four weeks off is now the beginning salary for teachers, and it took me thirty-six years to get there.

EMC: Isn't it amazing. Teachers salaries have increased greatly.

EK: Oh, my goodness. They're much better now. I should have stayed. I left too early.

EMC: Well, thirty-six years is enough.

EK: True.

EMC: That's a long time, dealing with children.

EK: But I always liked my job.

EMC: Oh, that's good.

EK: I've always enjoyed it.

EMC: So you've been retired for twenty years or so.

EK: Since '82.

EMC: Yes.

EK: But I have never stopped working.

EMC: Oh, and what have you done?

EK: I was admissions counselor at Albertus Magnus College for a couple of years.

EMC: Oh, so you did work after that!

EK: Yes, I did. Then I taught English at the Business Careers Institute for two years. When I was working for Albertus, they sent me down to New Jersey for recruiting. So I traveled quite a bit. Then my last job, that I'm still holding, I got in 1988, assistant director to Adult Education in Southington, Connecticut. And I've been working there since 1988.

EMC: Oh, and is that a five-day week?

EK: Four nights a week, five to nine. It's a night job.

EMC: Oh, nights.

EK: Because it's Adult Ed.

EMC: Right. Okay.

EK: And it's part time. As a matter of fact, I go tonight at five o'clock.

EMC: Oh, you do? Oh, my word. We've got to wrap things up then.

EK: No, I'm not in a hurry.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes.

EK: So I'm still working.

EMC: So five to nine.

EK: Right. Four nights a week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

EMC: Right. My last question for you is what is the significance of your Marine Corps career during World War II for your life? What impact did it have? And what did it teach you?

EK: Well, I think it taught me how to get along with people, because we had such a close association living with these people for so long a time at boot camp, at radio school, in California. It's matter of two and a half years. When you live that closely with people, it's a give-and-take proposition. I think you learn a lot about personal relationships and what you have to do to keep a friend and what you have to do to be a friend. I think probably that was the most important thing that I learned. What I learned in coding and decoding has not helped me a lot because I

have no occasion to use that at all. But it certainly was good training, and nothing that you ever learn is wasted. I thought that was a good experience. But I think the best thing that came out of the whole situation was the fact that you learn how to deal with people. I think that helped me a lot in my teaching.

EMC: Because it's a people-oriented job. That's for sure. That's great. I want to thank you very much for your wonderful reminiscences of your years in the Marine Corps in World War II. We'll have this transcribed, and we'll do a little editing. Then you'll get a final copy. Thank you very much.

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