VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

Mildred Lindner

Conducted by Ms. Deb Barrett

February 4, 2006

This project sponsored by the Indian Prairie Public Library
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(Note: Corrections made to original transcript by interviewee are noted in parentheses.)

This interview is being conducted on February 4, 2006, at the Indian Prairie Public Library in Darien, IL. My name is Deb Barrett, and I'm speaking with Millie Lindner. Also joining us today is Patricia Graczyk, Millie's daughter. Ms. Lindner was born on August 21, 1913, in Chicago, IL, and now lives in Naperville, IL. She is a retired store clerk, and learned of the Veterans History Project through the Indian Prairie Library Newsletter. She has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. Here is her story.

Millie, where were you living at the time you entered the service? What were you doing before you went into the service?

Well, I was a clerk at a store, and I was living with my parents.

Okay. And did you enlist in the service – there was no draft for women, so you enlisted. What made you decide to?

Well, I had been volunteering with the Red Cross in the hospitals. So I became a medical WAC.

So you decided to continue doing what you were doing.

Yes. I figured they educate you and all, and I thought, "I might as well go in the Army and do it." I'm kind of a joiner, so it wasn't a surprise.

There were not many women in the service at the time.

No.

How did your family react when you told them what you wanted to do?

Well, they knew how I was. They accepted it.

Were they happy? **Were they not sure? Were they worried?**

They were content. That was what I wanted, so that's what it should be.

Why did you pick the service branch that you did – the Army – there were women in other branches.

Oh, I don't know. My husband, at that time … [was my boyfriend] [and] he was in ?. And I had a brother in the Navy. But the Navy didn't appeal to me too much – I get seasick. (chuckles) I volunteered for the Army. At the time they had billboards all over. They were looking for medical people. So I told them I had some medical experience. Boy, I was in there before you knew it! (both chuckle)

Where were you inducted?

Inducted? It was a fort outside of Chicago on the north side – (daughter's comment: Fort Sheridan?). No, not Sheridan, another one. … Raleigh or something like that. Actually, there were booths all over for getting people in, so I just sat down and filled out the form and talked with the person. And there it was.

And what year was this?

'44, I think. I was in '44 and '45 – two years.

So 1944 you think.

I joined.

And how old were you?

Figure it out! (both chuckle) (daughter's comment: 31?) Early 30's.

What were your first days like? Your first days in the Army, when you first joined? What did they have you do? You had to go in and they issued you uniforms?

[Fine.] I didn't get the uniform until – well, I joined on June 14 which is an American day, and [then] I got my uniform on the fourth of July.

Very good! So what were those first days like after you were inducted?

Fine.

But what sort of things did you do?

What did I do. Well, they got you doing – not much of anything. We had to just sort of get … [accustomed] to being in a group and marching. Everywhere you go, you march. That's it. You marched over to the mess hall, and you marched over to the drill field, and always in the whole company.

Did you have brothers and sisters? Or was this something that was new to you – living with a number of different people?

I enjoyed … [that, having a lot of people around.] I enjoy people a lot.

What were your living conditions like then? Were you in a barracks?

Yes. In the barracks.

Tell us what that was like.

You had cots. It kind of gets rough right at the beginning, because when they say, "Jump!" you jump. You had the locker you had to put your clothes in – roll them up, and put them exactly in the same place. And they would come, and if you had anything out of place, they told you about it! (chuckled) You couldn't have anything personal around, like your personal underwear and things like that. You had to keep hiding that (both chuckle). The Army stuff is itchy – you get raw. So everybody always had civilian silks. So we were hiding them all the time. (Daughter's comment: Tell her about the bathrooms – the latrines.) The latrines – Oh! Those latrines were fine. The one that got me was when you were getting out, they take you out of your company and you have to be with other people from other companies. They put us in – this was all in men's stuff, washrooms and that – well, in that situation they had four toilets. Right in the middle of the thing, and they expect you to go – I couldn't go!

No privacy, huh? (both chuckle)

No privacy! And you'd sit there for a while, they'd ask, "Did you go?" Nothing. Your insides were bashful! (both chuckle)

So you said you had your cot. How many women were in a barracks like that?

Oh, gosh. I think about 40 or 50.

And what was your day like?

The day? Well, we'd get up at 6:00, then you'd hurry up and clean up your area. And you had to make your bed so that they'd flip that quarter in it, you know? And they did do it! You made sure that even the windows around – I had a window by my bunk, so I had to keep that clean. And your area had to be, before you even went for breakfast this had to be done. You almost had to get up at Midnight to get things all cleaned up.

And after you got it all cleaned up?

Then you ran. ['cause] by that time you were kind of close for time, because the girls were always starting to get in their lines in the company group.

How much time did you have from 6:00 until you had to be in line?

Well, I don't know about the line. But breakfast was at 7:00.

So you had an hour to get up, get yourself ready, get your area cleaned up, and be in line and marching off to breakfast.

Yes. Then you get into the company, into the group. You march off to the mess hall.

What were the meals like?

They were good. The meals were good. There weren't any eggs for the civilians, but there were all kinds of eggs for us. (chuckles)

So, what was a typical breakfast?

Well, you could pick what you wanted. They had everything there. The hot and cold cereal, eggs different ways. Of course, you had to take what they were working on. It was a good life.

So you had half an hour for breakfast, an hour for breakfast, what?

Something like that. It seemed like 45 minutes. It was enough time.

What did you do after breakfast?

Then you had to go to wherever you were assigned. We had to [learn to] march as a group. So that was one of the things.

And so, besides marching what did you do?

Not much of anything else.

Did you do calisthenics?

Oh yeah. You had exercises. And there were these hikes. They also were throwing these air things at you, and you had to be fast. We were just getting the masks. And so you had to learn to be fast. Because they … throw and you'd think it was the real thing and then should you kind of relax, and they would throw some more. And then they'd put the real thing in there, and boy, did that sting!

Oh. So it was like a gas thing? And when you saw it flying over you had to put your mask on?

Oh yeah. Real fast!

So you had a gas mask with you all the time?

Yes. You carried that in the backpack.

What kind of gas did they throw – tear gas?

Yes.

So you really had to put your mask on fast because you didn't want that tearing!

Oh, yes, you did. And you have a tendency, when they were throwing the regular stuff, they would slip in a tear gas.

They didn't want you to get comfortable with it.

That's right! And so … [if you weren't fast] you learned to be fast. And they were clumsy. They weren't that easy to put on! So, anyway.

So they wanted you to have real practice.

Oh, yes. They sure did. But you learned. You learned. You kind of got instinct – [I don't know] you got that mask on fast!

So what other types of training did they give you?

Well, there was a lot of marching. You know. Every Saturday was a parade day, and you'd go in your group, with your flag and that. And they marked you on it. Just a couple or few would be chosen where they would mention what group. Our group never got a mention. But you could see the groups were getting better as time went on. That was every Saturday – oh, a couple of months – that you were parading and … [getting marked] and watched.

What were your uniforms like at this point? What were your uniforms like during the week when you practiced? Did you have trousers, pants?

Yes. Well, at that time they had more skirts.

Even during the week when you were doing your practicing and things?

Yes. The pants were later. Everything was that skirt. The first week there, we were washing our skirt and blouse in the sink. Someone had an iron, and we were standing in line … [and] we had to iron it because the next day you had to be perfect. But that was hard to wash, that uniform. It was a rough material, you know.

Was it wool?

No. It was something like this.

A little stretchy? Like a cotton kind of something? Or something a little stretchy maybe?

Not too much. It was pretty stiff. You know.

Okay. Like a duck – not quite a denim material.

Yes.

Okay. So you had a skirt and a jacket and a blouse.

Most of the time you had only the blouse and the skirt because this was the summer – in July.

Did you have a tie of some sort?

Yes, there was a tie that you had to have clean, no matter what. Afterwards you sent it to the laundry. But this was … [you cleaning your uniform]. Boy, I was ironing at 10:30 at night, and they'd put the lights out. And we're still ironing. (both chuckle)

Did you have to keep your shoes shined?

Oh, yes. But they were easy. They stayed shined. Oh, they were good shoes.

Good quality.

Oh, yes. I wore them for years. And they fit well. They had to – all that marching, you could have blisters all over.

Right. And you had nylons, stockings.

Right. Well, they issued you the cotton ones, and then you had to hide the nylons (both chuckle). But during ? you wore them. But not if there was anything special, you had to put on those cotton ones.

Did you have a dress uniform?

Yes.

How did your dress uniform differ from your regular uniform?

It was the same.

It was the same uniform?

Yes, it was the same uniform. We had nothing special. Well, that was kind of new. We were among the first – I think they said 200 WACs.

So you were at the beginning.

Yes, the very beginning. So we got the dirty end of things.

So you said you were among the first 200. So, did you do all your training together – the women did all their training together?

Yes. We were at Camp – where was that. Gee, I don't even know the name of the camp! (daughter's voice interjects: You were down south somewhere, too.)

Yes. We were down in Georgia. That was the women's training.

(Daughter's comments again: Was it __?) No, that's out in California. Pembroke or something? (Daughter: No, but if I hear it I'd recognize it for sure.) Okay. We can get that later.
Since you were among the first women to do this, and the military was generally considered men's work, how did the men react?

The men?

Yes. How did the men in the service react?

Well, there were two kind. There were those that hated us, because they had to go to the front when we took their place. They were working in offices and things like that, and they had to go to the danger. So they didn't like us. And then the people, too, they didn't like us because they thought we joined because we wanted to be with the men (both chuckle).

I guess that face you made says it all!

Yes.

The ones who didn't like the fact that you were there because they thought you were taking their jobs, what did they say to you? How did they let you know they were unhappy?

Well, it was their attitude. You could sense it. You know. Nobody treated us badly. In fact, we were treated kind of nicely because this was all men, and all of a sudden there were women, you know? And then in the basic they had every night there was a dance.

Every night?

Every night.

Wow!

In the one certain barracks. And so, that was at nice. They used to cart us there. Oh, and the fellows would have refreshments or that, and a party like. So they'd come for us in a truck. And we had to stand like a bunch of cattle (both chuckle). And they would take us

there. And at a certain time, say 10:00, they'd say, "That's it." They blew a whistle and we'd be ready.

To load back on the truck and go back to your barracks!

Yes. Back to our barracks. That was nice. It was a friendly, it wasn't a cozy attitude – just friends. They were glad to have someone to dance with. It was nice.

Okay. So you were in your basic training – this was in Georgia?

In Oglethorpe.

Oglethorpe. Okay. So you were in Oglethorpe and this is what you were doing. How long was your basic training?

It was about two months. I had different things I was in. Yes, I would say about two months, ten weeks, something like that.

So you did the marching, you did the exercises. You had classes, too, right?

Oh, yes.

What did you learn in the classes?

Well, [see] I was in medical, so I had medical classes. Oh, and that was a nice thing. The teachers were officers. They would lecture. Come Saturday you got a test. There was an old __?, you know. You had to keep your eyes open, keep your ears open and take it all in, because on Saturday you had eight hours of tests. So that was kind of rough, but we made it.

Were there any of your instructors that you remember, either good or bad?

They were all nice. They were formal, you know. There were no friendly kind. They were the teacher, you were the student, and you were going to pick it up, whatever they were lecturing.

Any that you thought were particularly good or anything you remember about any of them?

They were all about the same. Very formal. You know. They had to teach us in a short time a lot of things. So they didn't monkey around.

(Daughter's comments: When you were marching, Mom, tell her some of the songs you did. Like that "Hip, Hip, I had a job …") Oh, like the cadence marching? (Yes. I remember her taking me to kindergarten. And to get me to walk quickly she'd do, "Hip, Hip, I had a job and I quit. I spit on the floor and the boss got sore,

Hip, Hip." (all chuckle) That was one of the ones that I guess when you guys were marching.) Do you remember any of them?

I remember that one. I think the, "I spit on the floor [and the boss got sore]." We didn't do anything like that! If we spit on the floor, they'd hang you!

(Daughter's comment: How did you get to be queen of the latrine?)

Oh. Everyone got a chance at that.

The queen of the latrine (all chuckle)?

That was your assignment. And that's what it was called – Queen of the Latrine! They would post who was doing it. Everyone had their turn. You didn't get out of it.

What were some of the other types of jobs or duties that came up? Did you ever end up doing KP?

Oh, yes. (both chuckle) I don't know how it would work, but this lady – I was going, 6:00 in the morning you had to be on duty – so 6:00 in the morning, I'm going in the dark. And this one lady stopped me. She said, "Do you know what [Millie]? If you want a good job, come real early." So I was always standing right by the door. And it worked out nice! I got to set the table and clear the table. And the other girls, they were washing these huge kettles. And the dishes and that. And you know, they don't dry the dishes with cloths. They blow dry them. And then also they had real hot water. And that would dry them! That's why at home I said, "I'm going to do it like the Army. I'm going to leave it sit there until it dries." (both chuckle)

So, any other kinds of jobs that there were besides those two?

Well, KP … Everybody had their chance at that. Oh. There were jobs that, if you, it was almost by name there were other jobs that had to be taken care of. Like, the windows that had to be washed. I had a window by my bunk, so I had to keep that thing shiny all the time.

Okay. So, you were preparing to be a nurse's aide, you said?

Yes. I was a nurse's aide. The nurses, they were officers. And us flunkies were Corporals and that.

Okay. So when you finished your training you were still a Private. Right?

No, I was a Corporal.

You were a Corporal by the time you finished your training?

(Daughter's comment: By the time you finished your training you were a Corporal? Or were you still a Private then?)

Oh. The medical training?

(Daughter: Yes.)

Oh. I was a Private until …, No. We were Corporals then. Because when you had the training you went up a notch.

Oh. Okay. So you got your basic training, your boot camp, that was the eight weeks. And you had training after that?

Yes. You went over here to Indiana – that's where we got our medical training.

Do you remember the name of the camp or fort you were at?

No.

Was it southern Indiana?

No [northern]. Because I was always thinking I was going to go home and visit my mother. But it never worked out that way. There were always extra jobs that had to be taken care of. [Yeah, that was good.]

When you finished your basic training, before you went on to the medical training, you went from Georgia up to Indiana. How did you get there?

By train.

By train?

Yes. Most of the time you stood – like cattle. (both chuckle)

So it was like a troop train that took you up? Not a passenger train?

No. It was a troop train. And those that got there first got the seats, and the rest of us stood.

How long was that trip?

The trip – it wasn't long. Maybe an hour, or not even.

From Georgia up to Indiana?

Oh, no. From Georgia to Indiana, that was more – that was longer. But from the medical to my assignment it was just a little trip.

Okay. But the time when you moved from Georgia to Indiana by train, how long was that? Was that like a day?

Yes. A long part of a day.

A long part of the day. What did you do on the train?

Nothing. You could talk.

You just talked.

Yes. You could visit, and they didn't quiet you. But, like I say, most of us stood. Everywhere we went. Here and there. I was assigned to Vaughn Hospital. That was right next door to that big hospital in Maywood.

Oh, okay – Hines?

So we used to go out. The girls used to hang around me, because they'd say, "Where are you going this time, Millie?" And then I'd tell them. And if it appealed to them, they'd come with me. Or they'd say, "Where else could you go?" So, then we'd have to go to a bus stop, like. But with the buses, most of the WACs stood, because the injured sat.

That was when you were assigned to a hospital already, right? But when you got your medical training in Indiana, did you have any chance, first of all, to take a visit home – did you get any leave?

No.

No. You just went from Georgia to Indiana and started that training. How long was your medical training in Indiana?

I think about sixteen weeks.

Okay. And that's where you got your training to be a nurse's aide?

Yes.

And you got some practical experience doing it in the hospitals?

Yes, yes. I had volunteered with the Red Cross, so I was trained already. And they would assign us certain rooms, certain – not rooms, but wards – and that's where you did your work.

Now, what sort of things did they teach you in your medical training?

First we had to learn a lot of the phrases, the words. That was kind of difficult. And then, well, the first thing they'd start you with was bed bath. They sit up and they...

A sponge bath.

Yes, a sponge bath. And lay them down and you'd get their big feet. They were very shy – men are very shy. (both chuckle)

You had to make them feel more at ease when you were doing that.

Yes. You had to talk about your brother or something else, you know.

Something to distract them.

So that they knew that you know what a man was like. That was easy, dealing with that. You bathed maybe forty of them in the morning between breakfast and lunch. And then, also, if there was any time you had to wash the bed down. So you were … [cleaning] all the time. They were very clean.

So what else did you learn to do besides giving the bed baths?

Well, temperature. We didn't give shots. They taught us how on an orange. But we never did give shots. But it was good training, because my mother – when I got home – my mother got diabetes.

So you were able to help her.

So every morning I had to come to her and give her her shot. You can't imagine how awful it is to stick your mother.

(Daughter's comment: Tell her about what you did so the men wouldn't get bed sores. What were you taught so that the men wouldn't get bed sores.)

So they wouldn't get bed sores.

You had to turn them?

Oh yes. The patients always had to be turned every couple of hours so that they didn't get back sores or that.

(Daughter's comment: And massage?)

Oh, massage, yes.

They liked that, huh? (chuckles)

They liked it, yes. After we got through with lunch, I would come in on the ward and I'd say, "Who wants a back rub?"

Everybody! (both chuckle)

Yes, everybody! So I was going around and giving them – there were four of us in the ward, and there were forty patients, so we each had ten patients. I had been giving them. And they don't teach you to – maybe I was doing it right, but they just, you had to use your muscles and your hands to give them a good back rub. Oh, they liked that! They liked a good back rub.

So how long were you in Indiana then?

In Indiana, [only] about twelve weeks.

So just a little bit longer than your basic training, then.

Oh yes. Just a little longer.

And what happened when you left Indiana? Where did you go next?

I came over here to Illinois to that Vaughn hospital.

Next to VA, next to Hines, rather?

Yes. So that's where .. I stayed there, they kept me there a year. Usually they changed you every so often, every couple of months they'd reassign you somewhere else. Oh, I had the officers' ward. And when they told me I had the ward the officers were in, I thought, Ugh! (both chuckle) They would be real finicky, real know-it-all. But they weren't. They were wonderful to us.

How were they different than the other ones you had – the other patients you had?

The GI's were normal. They were rough. Everything was up in the air. The officers were very reserved, refined, very polite to us, they treated us very nicely. The others, they used to monkey around, you know (chuckles). But here, these officers appreciated anything I could do for them. The bed pan. Oh. You'd bring it to them. They'd raise their hand or press a button or something. You'd come and they'd whisper to bring the bed pan. But you didn't take it away. They'd wait until one of the boys (both chuckle). And then they'd ring. So we never touched them. They used to call that "the duck." It was a long neck like, so that's how'd they'd __ ?. So when you'd go up there, they'd say (whispers) "I need the duck." But you never took it away. They always …

(Daughter's comment: What would you do when – you said that sometimes that with mortars, or men that were shell-shocked, that they had trouble urinating. What were the things you were taught to do to help them?)

Hot water! Running hot water. You'd get a big glass and you'd let it trickle, and that would kind of give them the urge. Poor guys. And they were so bashful. When you'd come they'd say, "I can't go and I have to go." And you'd …

You had to do something to make them feel comfortable enough.

Yes. You had to talk to them.

(Daughter's comment: Or put their hands in warm water?)

That was another thing. You'd put their hands in warm water – not hot, you had to be warm. And eventually they would come.

How long were you at Vaughn?

That's where I stayed for a year.

A year?

Yes. Then my husband was discharged and I got out on his discharge.

Oh, you got discharged – were you married at the time?

I got married in service.

Oh, you did. Tell me about that. Did you meet him there, or you were just dating there?

No, I worked for his sister.

Did you meet him in one of the wards, or you just knew him because of his sister?

[Because of his sister]. Well, I volunteered and I was shipped here, and he was shipped out in Canada. He worked on the Al-Can Highway. That was the group that made that thing.

(Daughter's comment: Why don't you tell her about the POW's at Vaughn – the Germans and the Italians.)

Oh, yes. They had to work, you know. The first bunch we got to were the Italians. And they're like, you know, we used to always say they were like little monkeys. They were short. Our guys would stand up, you know, and the POW was down here somewhere.

So, they were all smiling especially at the women, when you had to go somewhere to the lab or that. So you go past them, and they're all smiling (both chuckle). But the Germans, they snubbed you. They may have lost the war, but the Germans were – I admired that in them, that no matter what, they were still Germans.

So they kept a sense of pride about them.

Oh, yes. They had it – they were proud. But the little Italians, they would crawl after us and they, if you were carrying something heavy they would pick it up and carry it for us, you know. But not the Germans, no. They would be glaring at us.

So the Italians were friendlier.

They were friendlier.

And the Germans were not.

No. They were defeated, like I said, you see. But they weren't lost. They may be down, but they're not out. That was something. I admire that. I admire that. But also, if a WAC would go where they were working, they would give dirty looks. You'd be afraid to go there. You always tried to have company with you, along side of you. I don't know why they gave us dirty looks. Well, I guess they gave it to the men, too. But we didn't notice, only when it was us getting it.

Did any of them speak English? Did they speak to you?

No, no. I didn't hear anyone … converse with any of us. But the Italians, they were friendly. But there's the Nazis – they were way up there.

The Germans were very tall, and the Italians were very short.

And the Italians. Yes, little guys, friendly little guys. But the Nazis were proud. And I admire that. But I didn't want to get too close to them. (chuckles) You know, get a slap or that.

So, tell me about you getting married in the service. What was that like?

Well, I knew my husband. I worked for his sister. And when he went in, and so we wrote every day. And we decided on a furlough that we were going to get married. So it did happen where they made – he got a furlough, and I had to try to match the furlough. So I had a nice – what the heck was he, a General? – on my ward, who was in charge of the ward. And so I was in good standing with him. So I told him of the situation that my husband could out on his – he was in for four years – and I would like to get out too. So, somehow I got out.

Was that on furlough? Did you mean getting on furlough, or getting out of the Army?

That was getting out of the Army.

Okay. But, back before, you said you married while you were in the service. Did you get a leave? And your fiancé got a leave?

Yes. You'd get fourteen days, so we each got fourteen days' leave at the same time, and we got married. One of the officers was a priest, and so he married us. It was so nice to have someone so close to... We had a very little church, like. So we were married in the church.

Where were you married?

Here, in Vaughn.

Okay. So you were at Vaughn at the time that it happened. And where was your fiancé at that time.

He was still in Canada.

So you each got a fourteen day leave, he came down, you got married in Vaughn?

Yes. And so we had about four days together and then …

And he had to go back to Canada?

Yes. He had to go back.

And you stayed at Vaughn.

Yes, I stayed at Vaughn.

(Daughter's comment: Tell her about how you wanted to get married in your WAC uniform and what the guys on your unit thought.)

Oh, yes. They asked, "What are you going to wear?" And I said, my uniform. And they said, "No, you couldn't do that to the poor boy, could you? He sees uniforms all the time. All the while. And here comes his bride – in a uniform!" So I had to go out and get a wedding dress. That was on a Thursday before my wedding on a Saturday! (both chuckle)

Did you get a regular long, white wedding dress, or a short dress?

I had a long dress, and I had a veil.

And so he appreciated seeing you that way instead of in a uniform.

I imagine so. I don't think he would care one way or another (both chuckle). He'd take things as they'd come.

(Daughter's comment: But the men on her unit – the officer's ward – when they were asking her questions. She's like, "I'm going to wear my uniform." They're like, "Oh, Millie, you're not going to wear your uniform!" It was the men on her unit who talked her out of it. How about when they heard his last name was Lindner? When they heard that Dad's last name was Lindner, what was their reaction to Lindner?)

Oh, yeah. They said, "Millie, you're not going to marry a – how did they phrase it – like a Nazi, you know, a German?" The way they said that, German, you know. And I said, "He was born here in the United States." But every once in a while someone would say, "You're marrying a German!" (Deb chuckles) I said, "Yeah."

(tape turns over)

Okay. So we were talking about your wedding. And you got married and then your husband went back to Canada and you stayed at Vaughn.

Yes. What she's talking about is, oh, when you said, I would say "I'm in Ward 23, in an officers' ward." Man, I could get anything! My one – the Major – he had to stay in bed all the time. I used to bring him crackers. And finally he told me, "Millie, do you know what I would like? Hot milk, warm milk with crackers." So, okay, I had to stay after my 7:00. I stayed and I warmed him, I went to the kitchen and told the fellows that I had this Major that likes warm milk and crackers. And I said, "So, can I have crackers?" I got the whole box! (both chuckle) And then, there is a hospitality room, I think they called it. And when I discovered it, I used to go there and bring cigarettes like this…

An armful (both chuckle)

Yes. And then I would just dump it and would say, "Here's some cigarettes." Oh, boy. They came from the sky and everywhere else. (both chuckle)

What else? I heard there were baseball tickets.

Oh, yes. Then, I also got to know this one GI in charge of – you had to go to his window – and he was in charge of the amusement. And I would say, "I … [from ward] 23, the officers' ward, can I get tickets for any different shows, you know?" He said, "Oh yeah. Just find out what they're interested in." So I had to go back to the ward and ask them who was interested in what. And I had my list, and I would get tickets for them. So they could go in the evening to these various shows.

Was this just for the officers or for the enlisted men, too?

I don't know about the enlisted men.

Okay. This is the officers you were working with.

Yes. This was my ward, my job. So, I was getting tickets for the circus, for the different downtown shows and that. So that was nice.

What else do you remember from your time? What were you living – were you living in any kind of barracks at that time?

Oh, yes. There were barracks, and they used to have where the head of this cot – it was a cot more or less – was here, the next guy, his head was there. We weren't all breathing on each other.

So you had a little more room in these barracks.

Yes.

And what were your meals like? Was everything in the hospital facility? All your meals? Or did you have a mess hall?

We had a mess hall. And we got exactly what they – this was in the hospital, this mess hall – and in that mess hall we got exactly what the GIs got.

What the patients had.

Yes, what the patients had. And the food was good.

What did you do in your spare time, when you weren't working? How did you pass your time?

Like I said there was the dancing in this one barracks every night. And then you could go into town. And I used to go to the town. And the women would hang on to me and ask where I was going today and find out where they could go. That was good. I was helping them get to know Chicago.

Did you see your family during this time – your parents and all that? You saw them pretty regularly?

Oh, yeah. I had Thursday's off. I had to work Sunday's – you worked Sunday. So my Thursday was my day off. So I would come home. And I didn't see my father very much because I had to be back – I'd leave there at 7:00; I'd catch the 7:00 bus. And I had to be – and in the morning, when I would like to stay overnight by my mother, I had to be

on the road; imagine, I had to be on the ward at 7:00. And here I'm in the city. But you managed to do that.

(Daughter's comment: Why don't you tell her how you ended up at Vaughn rather than going overseas.)

How I ended up at Vaughn? I don't know. How did I end up there?

(Daughter's comment: You said you made a decision because Uncle Bob was stationed in the Pacific. Why don't you tell her a little bit about that.)

Oh, yes. My brother was sent overseas. He was in the Japanese waters. He was in the Navy. They were parked in the Japanese waters. So, I asked to stay. And here I was, because I could go home to my mother. Because she had somebody to – we both worried if anything would come up about a ship being sunk.

So you had two brothers?

One. I had two brothers, but one was married and had about four children. And the single one – he volunteered.

So your Mom had two kids in the service – you and one of your brothers.

Actually there were stars you hung in your window. My Mother had I think it was four stars. Danny and I, and my brother – who was that fourth person – but there was that flag with all the stars.

So you were at Vaughn for a year, you said?

Yeah. A year. They didn't take me out of there. Now, when I think about it, I can see why. They didn't change me. Every month or every second month or that, the girls would all get switched. And they even asked, "How come you don't get switched?" I said, "I don't know. Be quiet! Be quiet!" (chuckles)

So what happened after that year? Is that when you got out of the Army?

That's when I got out.

And why did you get out – why did you not stay there?

Well, my husband got out, and I got out on his points. You got out if you had so many points, so I got out on his points.

So you could really start your married life together.

Yes. I liked the Army. I would have stayed if things hadn't come up. Like my brother – my brother got sent to Japan. But I liked the Army.

So you got out because your husband was getting out.

Yes.

You got out together. Where did you end up settling down?

We lived with his folks about a year. And then we lived with my folks for about a year. My mother had a house, so she had a flat made upstairs, and we lived in there.

So what year did you end up getting out then – in '45?

Yes.

And where were you discharged?

Where? At Sheridan.

At Ft. Sheridan.

(Daughter's comment: Why don't you tell her about taking the IQ test in the Army, and how badly you did on the IQ test. Why don't you tell her about that – Dad scored over 130 and you only got – remember that?)

Dad got in the 130's and I got 126.

(Daughter's comment: She said, "I'm a dummy. I only got 126 on the IQ test." (all chuckle) I told her that's in the top 5%! It's real good.)

Daddy got good. He was smart.

So, you left, you settled down. What did you and your husband end up doing then as far as work?

We went back to our jobs. They kept his job open for him. And, of course, I was working for his sister, so I got my job back. Then the babies were coming. I had two of them – her and her brother. And that was interesting.

(Daughter's comment: You also wanted to go back to school, on the GI. After you got out of the Army you had planned to go back to school. Do you want to tell her about that?)

I did go back to school. I worked. I was working, so I took evening classes. We had a library close by, and I got two years of school, college.

What kind of classes did you take?

Regular.

Were you taking classes toward a degree, or classes that interested you?

I was going for a degree. If I had stayed longer. This way I had two years of college, which helped.

What type of degree were you looking for?

The regular.

(Daughter's comment: Bachelor's. I talking about right out of the Army. You said you wanted to go into beauty school.)

To beauty school?

(Daughter's comment: Yes. You told me when you got out of the Army you wanted to study to be a beautician.)

Oh, yeah.

But you didn't do that.

Well, I went to a school. I did go to school. What did I take? I remember something natural.

(Daughter's comment: I think my brother came along.)

I was going to say. Oh, yes. Because working with the hair, I got nauseated from the chemicals. So I had to leave that.

But you said you got two years of college. Where did you go to school?

In the library. In the neighborhood.

(Daughter's comment: Wright Junior College in Chicago. But you got your GED in the library.)

That's it. I knew I had gone to the library to school.

(Daughter's comment: When she was in high school you could take a two year business degree. And so, at age 60 she got her GED; at age 70 she got her Associate's Degree.)

In business?

(Daughter's comment: Actually it was in psychology. And she would have gone on for a Bachelor's degree. But then she helped me with my kids.)

Yeah. Then my grandchildren were coming along.

Have you kept in touch with anybody you knew while you were in the Army?

No. I haven't seen any of them. One of them, though, was supposed to – the husband worked with my husband – but we never seemed to make a date to see each other. They were from all over, you know, these girls.

Did you join any veteran's organizations?

Yes, I belong to one.

Which one?

In Naperville.

(Daughter's comment: The American Legion. She's always been a member of the American Legion. I think since she left the service.)

American Legion?

Yes.

Any others that you belong to? Any other veteran's organizations?

No. That's all you need is one, then you belong to them all.

Do you go to any reunions? Have you seen anybody that you knew in the Army?

No, I haven't seen anyone.

No one that you knew in the Army?

No. But the veteran's clubs are nice. But they were at night, and I couldn't drive at night. I had a hard time. So I wasn't able to go to a lot of their doings and meetings and that. So I just went when they had a social.

(Daughter's comment: I've contacted the Naperville American Legion that she belongs to and explained that she'd like to go to meetings but they're at night and she can't drive, and asked if somebody could drive her. But we haven't had any

luck with that. However, they did do one thing for Veterans' Day. Somebody came and got you this past year and took you to the cemetery.)

Yes. On Veterans' Day. Somebody called. I said I would go, but I didn't have transportation. So they did send someone. It was nice. And especially they made a fuss over me because – a woman in the Army? Oh! And a couple of them came up to me and said, "Thanks for joining and … [nursing] the boys." I thought that was so nice. The job wasn't hard – the nursing. You'd be taking the fellows here and there, wherever they were needed – the lab and the x-ray and that. You'd take them there, you'd leave them there, you'd go back into the ward and pick up another guy and get him to wherever. Then you had to remember where you left them! (all chuckle) So then you'd ask, "Are you ready yet?" And when they were ready you had to push them back to the ward.

How did your time in the Army influence your life later on? How did it influence the way you look at things or the way you think about things?

I learned a lot in the Army, going into civilian life.

Like what?

You weren't lost. You were somebody, and you got attention.

So it kind of gave you some more self confidence.

Yes. Self confidence.

(Daughter's comment: She passed it on to us. Like I said she used her drill routines to get me to walk to school. And then she told me what they had done for the men who had shell shock and couldn't go to the bathroom. So that was something I used when I was toilet training my kids, actually. I'd run water and that got them to go! And then we would laugh that she … [taught me to give] back massages. She taught me how to do it, and then I had to give her and my Dad back massages.)

So you had some skills that came in very handy.

Yes. I think it's the attitude you take. The women volunteered. You couldn't crab about it. But you still did because there was stuff that you had to do. (chuckles) Like one of the punishments was you had to wash out the coal bins. Boy! Everybody wanted to avoid that one!

(Daughter's comment: Why don't you tell her about the toothbrush to clean the bathrooms?)

Oh, yes! The bathroom floor!

Did you have to do that ever?

No! I saw to it that I didn't.

Is there anything else that you would like to share with us before we end the interview? Anything we didn't cover? Anything you'd like to say before we finish?

(Daughter's comment: Are you proud to be a veteran?)

Oh, yes! And, you know, for a long time, veterans, … [nobody] knew who they were. But all of a sudden these past two years we are being important. Like we had that veterans' thing for Veterans' Day. And I'm telling you, all the excitement and congratulations, especially a woman. See there are five women in with the men. I wanted to be – they were trying to get me to go into the auxiliary, the women's auxiliary. I said, No! I'm a veteran! I earned a veteran's right. Why should I go with the women that stayed at home! So, then I'm joining the veteran's. I got in there.

So you're proud of your service and proud to be a veteran?

Yes. Now they're coming alive. They're looking at, well the veterans are all old, most of them are in their 80's.

(Daughter's comment: Mom, what was your reaction to Pearl Harbor?)

Well, I didn't like the Japanese. I still don't. When I see 'Made in Japan' I put it down. They were bad. They were nasty. They were nothing special. It was – I think I'm done, unless you have any other questions.

No, that's it. I just wanted to get your last thoughts. And with that we're going off record.