

EDNA PENNY RICE
Denver, Colorado Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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Edna Penny Rice

PREFACE

This transcript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted on 7 March, 1986, for the Women's Overseas Service League.

Signed, dated agreements of release and biographical information accompany the original cassette.

Transcribed by Patricia Siggers
Lansing, Michigan

10 July, 1988

EDNA PENNY RICE

2 Denver Unit

MB: What is your name?

4 ER: Edna Penny Rice

MB: When did you join the Denver Unit of WOSL?

6 ER: In 1975.

MB: Were you in the service?

8 ER: Yes, I was.

MB: What branch of the service were you in?

10 ER: I was in three different branches: WAAC - Women's Army
Auxiliary Corps; WAC - Women's Army Corps; and WAF -
12 Women's Air Force.

MB: What prompted you to come into the military?

14 ER: I felt like I was as good as my brother and fiance, and
wasn't any better. Besides that, I had a lot of
16 patriotism.

MB: Before you went into the Army, what did you do?

18 ER: I was the chief deputy tax assessor for Crook County,
Oregon.

20 MB: What year did you come into the Army?

ER: On July the 26th, 1942.

22 MB: What did you do in the service?

ER: Personnel and administration.

24 MB: How long were you in the service?

ER: Almost twenty-four years.

26 MB: Tell me where your travels took you when you were in the service?

28 ER: Every one of the theaters: The Far East, the Middle East, and the European theaters.

30 MB: When you were in the service, what kind of housing did you have?

32 ER: Well, anything from tents to no-tents and rooms six feet by eight feet and open bay barracks.

34 MB: What was your uniform dress?

ER: In the WAAC and the WAC, it was OD's (the OD Army green) and pinks for formal dress. In the Women's Air Force, it was the Air Force blue in the winter and suntans for summer, and originally, the WAF wore blue and white cords in the summertime.

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40 MB: Tell me some of your most exciting, funny, sad or
whatever experiences you had?

42 ER: When I started out at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, one month
after I was there which was about the 26th of September,
44 we formed what was known as the First Separate Battalion,
and that's three hundred fifty women. They sent us to
46 Datona Beach, Florida, to open up the Second WAC Training
Center. We arrived in a total blackout at 2:30 in the
48 morning. All got out of the car, lined up with all of
our gear (clothing and gear for combat) and marched for
50 three-and-one-half miles to the Osceola Hotel in total
darkness--no moon, no anything. We opened up the Second
52 WAC Training Center at 5:00 o'clock, the 3rd of October,
1942.

54 A few days later, several of us went across the Halifax
River to the theatre over on the beach, away from the
56 mainland. Every time you crossed the Halifax River
Bridge, there was a Shore Patrol that had to look at your
58 dog tags. We would pull them out, and he would look at
them: That was our ID. On the way back, two of us had
60 passed through and the third girl was a very timid,
sensitive individual from Seattle, and all of a sudden
62 the SP took her dog tag and said, "My, those are warm!"
She said, "Well, they ought to be. They've been in
64 between two fryers." (Laughter)

MB: How about another experience?

66 ER: Well, I think those were two pretty good ones, right
there! (Laughter)

68 MB: O.K., fine. Do you think that you can compare the
service careers then with the service careers now? Or
70 don't you know that much about the service now?

ER: Oh, hardly; because in 1986, we're in peacetime. Then,
72 we were all in combat. I have an awful lot of foxhole
and molehole time. That makes a lot of difference.

74 MB: When you went into the service, what required the
greatest adjustment from your point of view - for you?

76 ER: I really didn't have too many adjustments to make.

MB: Tell me one more time what you did before you went into
78 the service?

ER: I was the chief deputy tax assessor for Crook County,
80 Oregon. Also, I was the commander of the third group of
the Oregon Women's Ambulance Corps, of which I had seven
82 companies and two or three platoons in each company. I
had all of eastern and central Oregon.

84 MB: So, you were really used to herding around and being with
a bunch of women, and being a leader from that
86 standpoint?

ER: Yes, ma'am. Not only that, but we had to take courses
88 like first aid, roadside mechanics; all kinds of things
like that, that we studied--and really passed. That's
90 why I was chosen very early--against my will, to be an
officer instead of going in as an airman or enlisted
92 woman.

MB: Did you expect that the experiences you had in the
94 military would give you a career when you got out of the
service?

96 ER: No, ma'am, I didn't. My career - I had a degree in
personnel management and business administration, which
98 was the thing I did not like very much because I wanted
to be a doctor, but that wasn't the reason I went in. I
100 went in for other reasons, and it turned out that I was
not allowed to resign at any time. Therefore, I stayed
102 for twenty-three plus; almost twenty-four years.

MB: O.K., that leads up to the next question. When you went
104 into the service, did you plan on making it a career?

ER: No, I did not. No.

106 MB: After your service was concluded, what did you do?

ER: I sold real estate and managed apartment buildings.

108 MB: What does being a member of WOSL mean to you?

ER: Well, I think it's a coalition of women that have similar
110 experiences and attitudes--or whatever. I enjoy each and
every one of the girls in my unit.

112 MB: O.K., that's great. Thank you.

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