# EDNA PENNY RICE

Denver, Co lo ra do Unit

Transcript of an Oral History Interview

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a p pr op ri at e fashion and with due credit to: Edna Penny Rice

PREFACE

This transcript is the product of a ta pe- recorded interview conducted on 7 March, 1906, for the W o m e n ’s Ov er se as Service League.

Signed, dated ag re em en ts of release and biographical in formation accompany the original cassette.

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| T r an sc ri be d | by Patricia Lansing, | Siggers Michigan |
|  | 10 July, | 1900 |

# EDNA PENNY RICE

E 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?

a ER: Yes, I mas.

MB: What branch of the service were you in?

**10** ER: I was in three different branches: WAAC - W o m e n ’s Army Auxiliary Corps; WAC - W o m e n ’s Army Corps; and WAF -

IE W o m e n ’s Air Force.

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| 14 | MB:  ER: | What pr om pt ed you to come into the mi li t  I Felt like I was as good as my brother | a ry ?  and fiance, and |
|  |  | w a s n ’t any better. Besides that, I had | a lot of |
| 16 |  | patriotism. |  |
|  | MB: | Before you went into the Army, what did | you do? |
| **IB** | ER: | I was the chief deputy tax assessor for O r e g o n . | Crook County, |

# EDNA PENNY RICE, Denver Unit 2

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| 20 | MB:  ER: | What year did you come into the Army  On July the 26th, 1342. | ? |
| **22** | MB: | What did you do in the service? |  |
|  | ER: | Personnel and administration. |  |
| 24 | MB: | How long were you in the service? |  |
|  | ER: | Almost tw enty- four years. |  |
| 26 | MB: | Tell me where your travels took you | when you were in the |
|  |  | service? |  |
| 28 E R : 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 O D ’s Cthe 0D Army green) | |

36 and pinks for formal dress. In the W o m e n ’s Air Force, it was the Air Force blue in the winter and suntans for

38 summer, and originally, the WAF wore blue and white cords

in the summertime.

# EDNA PENNY RICE, Denver Unit 3

40 MB: Tell me some of your most exciting, funny, sad or wh at ev er experi en ce s you had?

42 ER: When I started out at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, one month after I uias there which was about the 26 th of September,

44 **w b** formed what was known as the First Se parate Battalion, and t h a t ’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 Cclothing and gear for combat) and marched for

50 t h r e e - a n d - o n e - h a l f miles to the Osceola Hotel in total d a r k n e s s — no moon, no anything. We opened up the Second

52 WAC Tr ai ni ng Center at 5 : 00 o ’clock, the 3 rd of October, 1342.

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 th ro ug h and the third girl was a very timid, sens it iv e individual from Seattle, and all of a sudden

62 the SP took her dog tag and said, ”M y , those are w a r m ! ” She said, ’Well, they ought to be. T h e y ’ve been in

64 between two f r y e r s . ” CLaughter)

# EDNA PENNY RICE, Denver Unit 4

MB: Houi about another ex pe ri en ce ?

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

68 MB: O.K., fine. Do you think that you can compare the s e rv ic e careers then with the service careers now? Or

70 d o n ’t you know that much about the service now?

ER: Oh, hardly; because in 1886, w e ’re in peacetime. Then, 7E we were all in combat. I have an awful lot of foxhole

and mo lehole time. That makes a lot of difference.

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| 74 | MB: | When you went into the service, what required the gr eatest ad ju st me nt from your point of view - for you? |
| 76 | ER: | I really d i d n ’t have too many adju st me nt s to make. |
|  | MB: | Tell me one more time what you did before you went into |
| 78 |  | the serv ic e? |
| 80 | ER: | I was the chief deputy tax assessor for Crook County, Oregon. Also, I was the commander of the third group of  the Oregon W o m e n ’s Am bu la nc e Corps, of which I had seven |
| BE |  | c o mp an ie s and two or three platoons in each company. I had all of eastern and central Oregon. |
| B4 | MB: | So, you were really used to herding around and being with a bunch of women, and being a leader from that |
| **86** |  | st an dp oi nt ? |

# EDNA PENNY RICE, Denver Unit 5

ER: Yes, m a ’am. Not only that, but me had to take courses

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like First aid, roadside mechanics; all kinds of things like that, that uie s t u d i e d — and really passed. T h a t ’s why I was chosen very e a r l y — against my will, to be an officer instead of going in as an airman or enlisted

w o m a n .

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

ER: No, m a ’am, I d i d n ’t. Ny career - I had a degree in personnel ma na ge me nt and business administration, which was the thing I did not like very much because I wanted to be a doctor, but that w a s n ’t the reason I went in. I went in for other reasons, and it turned out that I was not allowed to resign at any time. Therefore, I stayed for tw en ty - t hr ee plus; almost tw enty- four years.

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

ER: No, I did not. No.

MB: After your service was concluded, what did you do? ER: I sold real estate and managed apartment buildings.

# EDNA PENNY RICE, Denver Unit **B**

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

ER: Well, I think i t ’s a co al it io n of women that have similar e x pe ri en ce s and a t t i t u d e s — or whatever. I enjoy each and every one of the girls in my unit.

MB: D.K., t h a t ’s great. Thank you.

Tr anscribed by Patricia Siggers

Lansing, Michigan