Flora Adams Wall – Life During WWII

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Oral Interview conducted by Tiffany Call

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Brigham Young University – Idaho
TC: Where were you born?

FW: Salt Lake City, October the 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1921.

TC: How old were [you] on December 7, 1941?

FW: I was 20.

TC: What do you remember about December 7\textsuperscript{th}? Do you remember anything?

FW: Yes, I do remember, hum, I can’t tell you exactly where I was, as far as in that, yes because my older brother… a year before we went in to World War II, he had a program where there were so many men that were sent over, sent out to get training. And my oldest brother was one of these that were sent out to be trained. And then he just came back and was going back to this, it wasn’t war, when December 7\textsuperscript{th} happened. So instead of coming back to civilian life, he had to just go on and be in the army. So my second brother, he went in too, he decided. And my younger brother went into the Marine Corps. And so I just couldn’t stand it that everybody was going into the service and not me, so I went. And I went in when it was the WAAC, which was the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps. And then a year later we were taken under regular army, before that it was Colonel Hobby that was over all the WAAC’s. So yes I remember because my family was involved.

TC: Did you serve in the armed forces during the war?

FW: Yes.

TC: Where did you serve?

FW: I served in New York City, at Fort Hamilton. And working in the office and what not, I had access to know when they were sending the women over. And so, I pulled strings when I got to be on the island overseas as a company. We served as a company when we went over. And we did office work. There were the girls that did drive the jeeps. But most of us did office work.

TC: Did you meet and make any new friendships during the war?

FW: I certainly did, and I still have them. And I met my husband there, and we were married in Paris.

TC: Did you meet any old friends from home?

FW: I met my two brothers overseas. We met in New York, my oldest brother and the next brother. When we met in New York, we spent time together. And then the three of us were sent overseas, I met the over there also. They came back a week after I was
married because it was right after the Battle of the Bulge. We all met in Paris, and they met my husband for the first time.

TC: How did the military train and prepare your for combat?

FW: Now before I went overseas, we had to go through the obstacle course. We did have to learn to shoot. We were all issued rifles. We did have our own rifles.

TC: How was the military different for men and women?

FW: Well because we were under women, we weren’t under men. We were an Auxiliary to the army and we were all under women. Now our officers had men officers over them, but they didn’t have anything to do with us. Now we worked under men officers in the different offices.

TC: Is there anything you wish they would have told you while doing training?

FW: No.

TC: What is your image of Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito during the war?

FW: Well I was closer to Hitler [in distance]. Our company went in to Paris, France and one week after it was obliterated, so there were still Nazis around. We were used to being under the Germans. We were under so many different people at the time that… now I forgot your question.

TC: What was your image of Hitler?

FW: Oh because I did get to go up to Berlin, I got to serve in Germany for a while. And I got to see… in Germany you could tell which was the American side and which was the Russian side because the people on the American, you know, they started to clean up right now. When you got into Germany you could definitely tell which sector we were in.

TC: What is your opinion of Japanese and Germans now?

FW: Now? I think they same as before. There were good Germans, there were bad Germans, there were good Americans, there were bad Americans, there were good Japanese, there were bad Japanese.

TC: When did you first hear about the German Concentration Camps?

FW: From the very beginning. In fact, there in Hamilton is where they had the section where they had prisoners of war right by us. It was publicized enough that we knew what was going on.

TC: How did your life change as a result of World War II?
FW: I grew up awfully fast. When you were a young girl, being in the service, you didn’t have to worry about how to dress or what to eat, you know. That was all taken care of. But the rest of it was up to yourself what you did. And so you sure learn fast though.

TC: Was there any trauma that stayed with you?

FW: Now this was for men, and the only thing I can remember was that the week after we got to Paris, France the girls were still restricted to be in the barracks by nightfall, we couldn’t be out at night. And we were billeted in a hotel. There was the bombing of the railroad station that was in Paris. It shook the buildings and everything that we were in. And they have all the girls not knowing what to do. So that was something that I always remembered. The buildings shaking and knowing what it was, wonder what we should do, whether we should stay where we were, to get down stairs, to get out of the building, you know. But as women [little laugh], we just stayed until we were told what to do.

TC: How did your religious beliefs help you cope with your military experience?

FW: At the time I wasn’t very… I was a young girl and I didn’t have any strong conviction. I believed in God and Jesus Christ, but I didn’t have any firm testimony in any religion.

TC: How did it affect your military experience?

FW: Well, my husband and I both knew that God was a part of our union. And when we got home, we knew that we wanted religion in our home, and so we went shopping. And I can remember, the church we were investigating, they were talking about the two Mormon missionaries that were tracking the area and telling the congregation to be weary of them and not let them in the house and everything. And being a Mormon, but not an active one, I knew not to say anything because I didn’t know enough to defend them. But as soon as I got out, I found out more, and so my husband joined the church and we were sealed in the temple.

TC: How did you contribute as an individual and in your community to the war effort?

FW: I served in the army.

TC: What did you do to entertain yourselves?

FW: Well in New York there was only some things we could do on our off hours. Because we could go into New York and they had tickets at the box office for service people. So we could always go in the huh… my mind has gone blank, what did they call them, the Red Cross where they had the donuts and the coffee, canteen. [Little laugh] It finally came. In Paris, there was history all over there, and so there were all kinds of things on our off hours. But then we always had to be back by nightfall.
TC: What kind of food did you have?

FW: When we were traveling, when we went overseas on the Queen Mary. And as we were traveling in from England to Paris, we had to stop at different camps along the way and so it was the regular army food. And when we got to Paris, they kept the trench people that did the cooking there, they just kept them in there so we had regular kind of food there.

TC: Did you have rationing?

FW: Yes we were all issued so that if we were in any place where we didn’t have food we would have our ration.

TC: How did the war affect the community?

FW: I can’t answer that. Well, because I was overseas I don’t know what they were doing at home. I know that they were on rations. I knew that there were shortages, but being in the service, that didn’t concern me. I was taken care of.

TC: Do you know any young men that did not return from war?

FW: I can’t think of anybody that died. Now in my family there were the four of us that were in the service. And so mother had the four stars hanging in the window. But there wasn’t any gold star up there, we were all alive. All four of us came home.

TC: What was it like to have the young men gone off to war?

FW: That didn’t concern me because I was right with them. Now they didn’t particularly want the WAAC’s because they knew that we were taking the office jobs and they would have to go to the front line, so they were not happy with us.

TC: In what ways did you keep in touch with your brothers, your boyfriend, friends, who served in the military?

FW: By letters.

TC: What are some of the most vivid memories of the World War II experience that stand out?

FW: It would be the day I got married. The day I transferred up to Germany to be with my husband. He got me transferred up there. Being able to count my own points and being able to come home on my own points. Coming home. When I went into the service, I just barely made it with weight. I was under weight. And when I went to be discharged, I had lost weight. And they were not going to let me, not release me because I had lost that much weight. So I had to [little laugh], I had to sign a lot of papers to get out, because I was so underweight. So one time I was thin.
TC: Thank you for answering my questions and doing this.

FW: Thank you.