

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Sarah Haworth

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: March 18, 2011

[Begin Interview]

TS: This is Therese Strohmer, today is March 18th, 2011. I'm here in High Point [North Carolina] with Sarah Haworth. This is an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Sarah, could you say—state your name the way you'd like it to be on your collection?

SH: Sarah, S-A-R-A-H, C. Haworth. H-A- no, I could have the Clapp in it.

TS: You want the Clapp? Okay.

SH: Yeah. C-L-A-P-P, Haworth, H-A-W-O-R-T-H. [chuckling]

TS: We'll get that right. Okay. Just a moment.

SH: Well, so many people spell it wrong.

TS: You want to make sure you get the spelling, okay.

SH: Yeah. [recording paused]

TS: Well, Sarah, thanks for letting me come and chat with you today. Why don't we start off with having you tell me a little bit about when and where you were born?

SH: I was born in Swannanoa, North Carolina, which is ten miles from Asheville, on this side of Asheville.

TS: So east of Asheville?

SH: Yes.

TS: When were you born?

SH: July the 27th, nineteen and twenty.

TS: And was Swannanoa—was that like a really rural kind of place, was it a city, what kind of—

SH: No, it was rural.

TS: Real rural?

SH: It had a stoplight and the post office and a—two or three grocery stores, and that's about it. Except it had Beacon Manufacturing Company, which was the industry at that time. They made blankets.

TS: They made blankets?

SH: "Beacon Blankets Make Warm Friends" that was their slogan.

TS: [laughs] That's nice. So what did your folks do?

SH: My father was the superintendent of a test farm, a state test farm that was owned by the Department of Agriculture in Raleigh.

TS: Okay.

SH: And he was the man who saw that it ran properly. We had—it was over three hundred acres of everything that you can imagine being raised. Like we had apple orchards, grape vineyards, cherry orchards, we had all kinds of truck farming[?], and we had vegetables all the time, fresh vegetables. And of course, then they had poultry and dairy, plus all the growing of the hay and all that. It was a—belonged to the state department, so it was a farm where the people of State College would come and plant things to—as experiments.

TS: Yes, test, to see—it's like the—

SH: Yeah, it was a state test farm.

TS: They called that the extension service or something?

SH: Yes, it was.

TS: Yup, okay. That's kind of neat. So your father was in charge of that?

SH: That's right, and that's what I grew up with.

TS: So did you get a lot of those fruits and vegetables at home?

SH: [laughs] I certainly did.

TS: Now, did you have any brothers or sisters, as you grew up?

SH: I had—there were seven of us, and I had three brothers and three sisters.

TS: And where did you fall?

SH: I'm the fifth one.

TS: Fifth oldest or fifth youngest?

SH: Fifth—fifth oldest.

TS: Fifth oldest.

SH: There are two younger than I.

TS: I see, okay. And, now, did your mom stay home and take care of you, or did she work at all outside the home?

SH: She stayed home and took care of me.

TS: With seven kids, I would think so, huh?

SH: But she died when I was ten.

TS: Oh, she did?

SH: And my father married again when I was twelve.

TS: And then, did she also stay inside the home?

SH: Well, she was a home economics teacher, and it was during the Depression, so she got a job teaching at the Swannanoa High School, teaching home economics.

TS: So she was able to do that during the Depression?

SH: Yes, she was.

TS: What was that like, growing up during the Depression, for you? Do you remember, as a little girl? Because you would have been, you know, ten.

SH: Well, I didn't know we had a depression, and that I had plenty to eat, I had a change of clothes, nothing elaborate, but I had everything I needed. So I really didn't know that we were in a depression, except every now and then we had people to come by and want food. And I remember very well that we fed everybody that came by. And we'd put them on the back steps and give them food or bring them in the house and give them food. But they were fed.

TS: Did—were they just kind of walking around, or were they local?

SH: Transient.

TS: Transient? Did you have like a railroad that was nearby?

SH: Not far.

TS: Not far? They might have come from that, maybe, then, you think?

SH: Well, they may have been just local people. I don't know. I just don't remember.

TS: Right. But you just remember them coming onto the porch and feeding them. That's kind of interesting. I've heard that story a couple of times from people who lived like out in a rural area, where they got fed. And so your—did—nothing—you don't think anything kind of changed for you, it didn't seem to change, because—

SH: No, no. I know we didn't have a lot of money, but we had plenty to eat, and that was the main thing.

TS: Losing your mother at such a young age probably was probably hard.

SH: Yes, it was. But my father married again and she was wonderful. And lived until she was a hundred and two.

TS: Is that right? How about that.

SH: And really reared me and the rest of us. [chuckles]

TS: So you had four siblings and—that were older than you.

SH: Right.

TS: Were they much older, were you close in age?

SH: I was the only child in ten years.

TS: Okay.

SH: And I'll explain that. My—they came a boy and a girl, a boy and a girl. And I was supposed to be a boy, but it was five years, and when I came, I was a girl, and then the next one was a girl, and that was five years. They didn't name me, I named myself, and in the meantime they had to call me something, so they called me Billie. B-I-L-L-I-E. I changed my name to Sarah when I went to college.

TS: Is that right?

SH: [chuckling] But I had named myself Sarah Cornelia Clapp because my father was Simpson Cornelius. So I got his initials and his middle name.

TS: Oh, interesting. How do you spell Cornelius?

SH: C-O—Cornelius?

TS: Yeah.

SH: C-O-R-N-E-L-I-U-S.

TS: Oh, okay. So what—you didn't like being called Billie or you just—

SH: No, I just didn't want to go through life being Billie. To this day, I'm Billie to all my family.

TS: Is that—

SH: And Sarah to people I've met since I've gotten married. Or since I started teaching.

TS: Yeah. Well, tell me a little bit more about growing up, then, in that time that you grew up. What— do you remember like what kind of games you played or did you have like a chore that you did at home for work or any of that?

SH: I'm afraid I didn't—well, later on, I loved to clean, so it was my job to—I would just clean the certain rooms on the weekend and go out and get all the flowers and put them in, but I didn't have to do that, and when I was older, I fixed the salads, I was more or less the salad girl. But I didn't really cook much until I got married.

TS: Is that right?

SH: But it was a wonderful way to grow up. I do not regret any of it.

TS: Did you learn to sew and—

SH: Yes, I did. I learned to sew, and we—the fact that we were a state test farm meant that all of these people from Raleigh would be coming periodically to check on their experiments, and so we had people coming and going from Raleigh, and they were wonderful people, and we had once a year what they call the Farmers Field Day, and we'd have people like the governor and the commissioner of agriculture and people like that, that most people wouldn't have gotten.

TS: Right, no, contact with them.

SH: Yes.

TS: That was just a normal kind of—

SH: Yeah, it was normal.

TS: How about that.

SH: And then when I grew—when I was ten, they gave me a job, and I was head of the strawberry patch, and I would pick strawberries for two cents a quart. And the—then they would sell them for ten cents a quart. But I'd get the two cents, and I was the head of the patch. And we had to measure the length of the runners and all that kind of stuff, so it wasn't just a matter of picking strawberries, although we did, and we would weigh them to get the weight of—see how much they weighed.

TS: So you were doing—you were helping them with their experiments, and doing the research on the growing of the strawberries.

SH: Yep.

TS: How neat. You still eat a lot of strawberries?

SH: Yeah, I still love strawberries. [chuckling] I remember in the cherry orchard, I'd go—we had a lot of sour cherries. And I'd get up in those cherry trees and eat so many cherries, sour cherries, that they began to get sweet. But I loved them.

TS: I remember about picking strawberries—it's a backbreaking—

SH: Yes, it is.

TS: And you're out in that hot sun.

SH: Yes, it is.

TS: Cherries, not quite as hot.

SH: No, but you had a big tree to climb.

TS: That's right, that's right. That's neat. So you did that when you were ten. Now, were you also going to school?

SH: Yes, I went to—I finished high school, and then I went to college.

TS: Tell me a little bit about—do you remember your elementary school, what it was like? Was it a small house, or?

SH: Well, it was a large school at that time. I went to Black Mountain to elementary school, and rode the bus every day, and I had to walk half a mile to get to the bus stop, rain or shine, snow—

TS: Snow, yeah. [chuckles]

SH: Or sleet or whatever. And then when I finished the elementary part, they changed the lines and I went to Swannanoa then, and was picked up in the school bus right in front of my house, so that was easier and better.

TS: Lot more convenient, huh?

SH: Yeah, that was much better. And I did well in high school, I was a salutatorian of the class, and there were around fifty of us.

TS: Nice. Now, did you—what—was there a particular subject, did you like school?

SH: I loved school.

TS: What'd you like about it?

SH: I just liked to learn and to do the work, and you know, and I loved to go to class and to see all my friends, and—

TS: You liked the social part of it, too.

SH: Yeah.

TS: Did you have a teacher that you really admired or enjoyed?

SH: I had a couple of teachers. My English teacher was wonderful, she really taught me grammar. I may not speak correctly now, but it's not her fault. [laughs]

TS: That's neat. Now, did you have a sense while you were in school, like what the future—did you think about, you know, what you were going to do when you grew up, sort of thing?

SH: Yeah. Well, I liked music and I was taking music lessons. With much sacrifice from my family, but they managed to find the money for me to go—to have a teacher. And oh, I had big plans, I was going to be a big concert pianist. [laughs]

TS: So you were a pianist?

SH: Well, I followed through with college, piano, so—but I haven't—and I've done a lot of choir directing and that kind of stuff since.

TS: So you've stayed with music.

SH: Well, other than the teaching, that's—and the music has helped me in teaching.

TS: Sure. I'm sure that's true, yeah. So you—did you—when you went to—so you were finished with high school. I'm trying to think about how old you are. Well, actually, when you—

SH: I was seventeen.

TS: Seventeen. So—

SH: Because that was before they had twelve years, and I graduated in the eleventh.

TS: The eleventh grade. Now, in that time, so—you're getting into the time where there's war going on, not here, but in Europe. So.

SH: Well, I graduated—

TS: That would be like '37.

SH: No, that's when I graduated from college.

TS: Okay.

SH: No, I didn't, that was '41 that I graduated from college. So it would have been '37.

TS: Thirty-seven. So that—we have some things happening, going to happen, in Europe.

SH: I wasn't aware of much of that.

TS: No. Did you ever listen to the radio at all?

SH: I listened to every opera that I could get on the radio, and various things, but music, I listened to.

TS: Could you get very many on the radio at that time?

SH: Well, I could get more then than I can now. [laughs]

TS: For the opera, yeah, that's—you have to pay for it now, to get those kinds of things, yeah.

SH: But anyway, I watched the—or listened to the radio right much.

TS: So tell me about how you decided when and where you were going to go to college. Did you go right after you graduated?

SH: Oh yeah, I went right after I graduated.

TS: Well, tell me about that.

SH: The—there were seven of us, and my father was determined that each one of his children would go to college. And we all did. And how he sent seven of us to school, I do not know. But anyway, I went to—it was called the Asheville Normal and Teacher's College, you ever heard of that? Well, that's where Geneva Spratt went. [Geneva Spratt Craig also has a collection in the Women Veterans Historical Project.]

TS: Oh, okay.

SH: Geneva Craig. And—because she and I were in the same class.

TS: So you've known her for just a couple years.

SH: Hm?

TS: You've known Geneva, then, for just a few years.

SH: [laughs] For a long time. Since '37 to '41, we were friends. And that was—it was a missionary school, and was inexpensive. As a matter of fact, if I remember correctly, it cost me a hundred and twenty-five dollars a year. We worked two hours every day, each one of us had a job to do, and we did it, and that paid for part of our—

TS: Paid for the school, part of it?

SH: But everybody did it, it wasn't just one person, or—

TS: Everybody had a job.

SH: Everybody had a job, so it was just like Berea [College], Kentucky, that does that.

TS: So what was it that you were hoping to do with college, with your college education?

SH: Well, they only—you could only get one degree, and that was in teaching. I mean, it was just that kind of school.

TS: And today, you know, teachers, they can pick, you know, biology or social studies—

SH: Well, I could take elementary or high school.

TS: Okay.

SH: And I chose elementary.

TS: And did you enjoy college? Now, you were still in the Asheville area, so were you still living at home?

SH: Yes, still in Asheville. No, I lived on the campus.

TS: Oh, you did, okay.

SH: And I enjoyed it. It was a girls' school, so we didn't have much interaction with boys, which was all right I guess. [laughing]

TS: You didn't have any dances or anything like—

SH: Occasionally, at the—I think at the end of my junior year and senior year, they had a dance, but it's not one of my vivid memories.

TS: So you finished up school, and then what happened?

SH: Then, I went—I got a job, and jobs were not plentiful in those days, so I was glad to get a job. I taught at—I'll tell you in a minute.

TS: Okay.

SH: At—it was in—right out of Salisbury, what's the name of that place.

TS: That's something we can—

SH: Rockwell.

TS: Oh, Rockwell?

SH: Yes.

TS: Okay.

SH: And—

TS: This is elementary education?

SH: I taught sixth grade. And it was real strange. When I went there, there were two places for teachers to live, one was in a teacherage that was owned by a man who made caskets, and the other one was with the family that was the funeral directors. [chuckling] So I stayed with the man who made the caskets. And it was there that we had the Pearl Harbor, I remember vividly the day—

TS: Well, tell me about that. What you remember from that day.

SH: It was Sunday afternoon, and I was doing my [unclear] writing. You know, you wrote letters all the time, because that was the only way that you could communicate with people. Sunday afternoon was my time to write letters, and we were—and I was writing letters, and the telephone—I mean the radio came on and said that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. And one of the girls that lived there's boyfriend lived—was working in the army at Pearl Harbor.

TS: Oh, my.

SH: So we sweated out the fact that we didn't know whether he had gotten killed or whatever. He was not killed, but it was a hard time there for her.

TS: Right.

SH: And it was then that I began to think about joining the army.

TS: You hadn't had any thoughts about it before that time?

SH: Not really. Well, actually, they weren't taking women into the army, because you see, I was in the first group of enlisted people. So it was during that year.

TS: Now, did you—had your father been in the military before at all, do you know?

SH: No, my father was not in the military. I had one brother who was in the military, and that was Hubert, who was a doctor, and he was a major, and he was on the Burma Road or—I guess you know what I'm talking about.

TS: In the Philippines?

SH: No, in India, wasn't it?

TS: Oh, the Burma Road, I'm thinking different road. So he was in before Pearl Harbor, or? Was he in the service before the attack?

SH: No, he was not in there until—

TS: So he joined after, and then he went—so he fought—

SH: I guess he was drafted, I don't know.

TS: So you had—girl, boy—so you had two brothers older than you. Did the other get drafted too?

SH: No, but my youngest brother, the youngest of the three, was in the navy. And he enlisted in the navy and served maybe eleven months and was discharged, and then Korea or somebody—something else came along, and he was drafted. [laughs] So he was in the navy at two different places.

TS: Two different times?

SH: Yeah.

TS: So he wasn't actually in during World War II, was he too young for that, then?

SH: Yeah, I think he was. I don't remember just how old he was when he enlisted.

TS: Yeah. So you had the idea, you said, with Pearl Harbor, but you didn't join right away?

SH: No, I joined that summer, after Pearl Harbor. That was December, and I joined that summer afterwards.

TS: You joined that summer afterwards. Now, we were—you were teaching school, still, for a while?

SH: Yes, I was teaching school at Rockwell.

TS: Now, what made you pick the WAAC?

SH: Well, at that time, that was the first thing that was available.

TS: So it was the only one that you could join?

SH: Yeah.

TS: Didn't have the options of the WAVES or—

SH: Didn't have the option of all the others. It was later that they saw that that worked and so they decided to take women in all the other services.

TS: So tell me a little bit about your decision, then. From what you remember at the time, why did you think about going into the WAAC?

SH: I guess I thought it would be an adventure, and I needed—I wanted to get out and do things. I guess that's about as good a reason as I had. [laughing]

TS: So how did you go about it? Did you—like, did you see posters or did you just decide and you went down and saw a recruiter? Do you remember any of those specifics?

SH: No. I think I—well, I left from Morganton, because my family was there. And I don't know whether—I don't know how it was, but I had to go to Fort Bragg to be—

TS: To get enlisted?

SH: Yes.

TS: And now, is that—you showed me a picture of you getting on a train? Was that you—

SH: That was in Morganton.

TS: So you're headed to—

SH: To Des Moines.

TS: To Des Moines. And so tell me about that, tell me about—now, was—did Geneva also sign up at that time or did she sign up later?

SH: She must have signed up later.

TS: Okay.

SH: And she joined the navy, she was in the navy.

TS: That's right, she was in the WAVES. Yeah.

SH: And she stayed in the whole time and she was an officer, which I didn't get to be, but that's all right.

TS: So tell me a little bit about, then—do you remember that train ride going down to Fort Bragg?

SH: I rode the bus going to Fort Bragg.

TS: Okay.

SH: That picture was when I got on a train—I mean, yeah—to go to Asheville to go to Des Moines.

TS: Oh, okay. Okay. So you first—oh, that's right.

SH: And then Asheville is when the other girl joined the group, you know, and we met up with each other so that we found out we each were going to Des Moines.

TS: Oh, okay. So—that's right, because you enlisted in Fort Bragg, and then you went to basic.

SH: That's right, but I didn't go right away.

TS: A couple months later. That's right. Well, tell me about that, tell me about your first days in training and basic training.

SH: We rode the train all the way to Des Moines, and we got there—oh, early in the morning, say four or five o' clock. And [laughs] I remember saying, well, come on, they will surely let us go to sleep before the—before we have to do anything. And as soon as we got there, we were bam-bam ready to go with all the basic training—we didn't get any sleep.

TS: Now, what'd your—your mother and your—your stepmother and your father think about you joining, do you remember?

SH: They were with it, I mean, they approved of it.

TS: And how about your siblings?

SH: Well, I don't—there wasn't anybody that disagreed with it, if that's what I wanted to do.

TS: Yeah. Same with your friends and everything?

SH: Yeah.

TS: So you're in basic, you're in Fort—

SH: Des Moines.

TS: Des Moines, and you're already—you get there and you're already doing stuff. Now, was anything particularly, you know, hard for you to do for the basic—anything physically?

SH: No, it was just—the whole thing was hard, you know. The regimen and the—all of that was not anything I'd been used to, but I managed and I got through it, and I wasn't—I mean, I think I got through it all right. I don't remember being homesick but one time there. See, I was young and I'd never been away from home, so. [chuckles]

TS: So that was hard.

SH: Yeah. But I managed to get over that, and I expect that most everybody that was in there was homesick.

TS: Well, how was it, did you do a lot of marching and things like that?

SH: Oh, yes, we did—oh, yeah, we marched to eat, we marched to everywhere.

TS: Do you remember what like a typical day in basic training was like?

SH: I don't remember much about that.

TS: You got up early, though.

SH: We did that first—we never got to bed that first day! [chuckling]

TS: Do you remember anything about, like, where you lived in, was it a barracks type?

SH: Yes, we lived in a barracks.

TS: Like an open bay with lots of cots in it, or was it just—

SH: There's a picture in there of what it looked like. And of course, there weren't any—it was all women, I don't think there were any men at Fort Des Moines, it was supposed—purely women, I think.

TS: Training for women. So what'd you think about—did you have any second thoughts, or—

SH: No.

TS: No?

SH: No. I didn't have second thoughts until it came time to make a decision as to whether I would stay in or get out.

TS: Okay. But now, how did you end up with the job that you did?

SH: Well, after basic training, they took twelve of us, and I told you that—and we were the first enlisted WACs in Washington, D.C., and we were celebrities, because up until that time, they hadn't seen anything like us.

TS: Well, how were you treated—

SH: They'd seen the captains and the majors and all that, but they hadn't seen anything that looked like an enlisted, and so—and we stayed at the YWCA at 17th and K [Street] in Washington. Which was a wonderful place to stay.

TS: What did you like—

SH: Army is not always like that.

TS: Well, what was it like? The—

SH: Well, it was just like a hotel.

TS: Oh, is that right?

SH: Yeah, I mean—we could get our meals there, and the busses picked us up to take us to the Pentagon every day, every time we needed to go, and you know. Everything was planned out for us.

TS: Now, when you say you were treated like celebrities, what—

SH: Because people stopped and looked at us. We'd be eating in a place, and they'd—

TS: People'd have their mouth open? [chuckling]

SH: Wanting to know what we were.

TS: Yeah. Oh, is that what they'd say? "What are you?"

SH: Yeah.

TS: What'd you—what'd you say?

SH: Well, we're the army. No, they didn't say much to us, but they did look at us like they weren't used to seeing us in Washington.

TS: So you think they were just surprised to see you.

SH: Surprised to see enlisted people.

TS: Well, now—

SH: Or women in uniform.

TS: Yeah. In Washington, D.C. Now, tell me a little bit about—as much as you can, or as you’re willing to, about your job that you had to do. Tell the—

SH: Well, what I—the group that I was in was in the office of strategic services, which is a precursor to the CIA. And so we were doing secret stuff, and I had to learn a separate language, I mean writing, sort of a shorthand writing, to do what I had to do, and that’s about as much as I want to say.

TS: Okay. I know that there’s groups—there’s a lot of women who did things like coding, coding work and things like that, in separate compartmented things, and—

SH: We didn’t code. That wasn’t what we did.

TS: Okay. So you had a secret job, and so what’d you think of that at the time? Because you must have known—

SH: Well, at that time, we were not—we were not allowed to talk about what we did.

TS: So what’d you do when people asked you? “What are you doing in the army, Sarah?”

SH: [chuckles] “If I tell you, I’m going to have to kill you.”

TS: Is that what you would say?

SH: More or less.

TS: And then people just let it go?

SH: Yeah. I mean, after all I—you don’t have to tell everything you do in the army, as a matter of fact, you’re not supposed to.

TS: Yeah.

SH: So.

TS: And it was wartime, so people understood.

SH: Yeah. And we worked at the Pentagon, and that usually was enough to satisfy them.

TS: People, when you'd say where you worked.

SH: Yes.

TS: Well, can you tell me—describe like, not the job, but describe like where it was that you worked? What'd it look like?

SH: Well, we were in the basement of the Pentagon. That ought to give you a clue. [chuckles] And—have you ever been to the Pentagon?

TS: I have not, no. I have never been to the Pentagon.

SH: It's quite an interesting building, you know, it has five—was five things, rings around it, and it took a college degree to learn where to go.

TS: [chuckles] Is that right? Now, did you have like a pass or a badge or—

SH: Oh yes, absolutely. They were not allowed—

TS: And so you had a clearance.

SH: We had to show that every time we went in and out.

TS: What'd you think—were you nervous at all about having—doing secret stuff?

SH: No.

TS: No? Did you—how did you feel about it at the time, as far as like your contribution to the military during the wartime? Did you think about that at all?

SH: I did when it came time to make a choice.

TS: Yeah.

SH: And that's when I started thinking about what I was doing and I know teachers were—they were needing teachers at that time, because a lot of them—the men, you know, were all gone, and a lot of the women were doing other things in shipyards and that kind of stuff. And I had a job available in Gastonia [North Carolina], and I just—one day I'd be one way and the next day I'd be the other way.

TS: What—what was tilting you in each direction?

SH: Well, I think mainly because I didn't—if I joined the army, I didn't know where I'd go or what would happen or how long it would be.

TS: So this is when they were transitioning from the WAAC to the WAC.

SH: Right, that's exactly right.

TS: So you had an opportunity to either get out or continue on.

SH: That's right. And I got out.

TS: Okay. And so, what were the things that would have been saying "Well, I think I want to stay in,"?

SH: Well, the fact that my friend was staying in, and that would have been nice to have stayed with her, but then who knows, we might not have been together anymore.

TS: Was your job going to change?

SH: It would have, yeah, I'm sure it would have. They would have sent us—I don't know where all they would have sent us.

TS: Did you like your job?

SH: Yeah, I liked it, and I loved being in Washington.

TS: What'd you love about it?

SH: Because there were so many things to do, the museums and the, you know, all those kind of—lots of music and we were in parades and they had dances all the time, you know, lots of stuff like that.

TS: So did you go to some of the dances, like with big band music and things like that?

SH: Yes, yes, sure.

TS: Yeah. And now, what—how were you treated by the civilian population? I'm assuming you went out in your uniform?

SH: Oh, absolutely, we had to. You couldn't—at that time, you had to wear your uniform.

TS: Did you? And so how were you treated by the—

SH: Very well. Yes. No, I can't—the only thing I remember was having my pocket picked.

TS: Oh goodness. Where was that?

SH: I'd just gotten paid, which was not much, but it was all the money I had, was it twenty-five dollars or something a month? Anyway, it was not very much, and I was in a store for some reason, and when I went to pay for whatever it was I was getting, my wallet was not there.

TS: Oh, they took the whole thing.

SH: And I had no idea. I mean, it just was so slick, and had to be my pocket picked, because they were doing it all the time and I just wasn't very careful. Anyway, that was the worst time I had. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah, that doesn't sound like very much fun at all.

SH: No.

TS: Now, did you meet a lot of friends through the service?

SH: Yeah, I did. Had a good time.

TS: Now, you said you did something socially, like—did you get to any concerts?

SH: Oh, yes. A lot of the museums had concerts on Sunday afternoon in the galleries and stuff, and I'd go to some of those.

TS: So you enjoyed that area quite a lot. Now, were you homesick there at all?

SH: No, no I was not. By that time I'd gotten over it.

TS: Yeah. And you were pretty busy, I'm sure.

SH: Yeah.

TS: What kind of hours did you have to work?

SH: We had to work shifts, in shifts, so we worked three different shifts, one morning, in the late afternoon, and then midnight would go in the night shift, and come back home the next morning.

TS: And you worked all parts of those shifts throughout your time there?

SH: Yeah. We didn't have the same hours all the time.

TS: Well, what did you think about, like, President Roosevelt at the time, did you have—

SH: I liked him.

TS: Yeah? What'd you like about him?

SH: The fact that he was a Democrat, for one thing. [laughing]

TS: There's a good reason.

SH: Well, I just liked what he was doing, and how he had helped the country so much with the WPA [Works Progress/Project Administration] and of course, I was from the mountains where the Great Smokey Mountain Park was developed, and just all that kind of stuff.

TS: Well, you're—but you lived through that time, and you know, a lot of young people today don't really know what that means. The WPA, what'd that do?

SH: [chuckles] We used to call it the Work Piddle Around, but it wasn't that. I mean, they would get out and do dangerous work, and it wasn't easy work making those roads through the mountains and all that kind of stuff.

TS: And did you have any thoughts about Eleanor Roosevelt at all?

SH: I liked her.

TS: What'd you like about her?

SH: The fact that she was a woman and that she was doing things like she did, and that women could emulate her. I liked what she was doing, she was—well, you know.

TS: She was very visible for a First Lady at that time, not like some of the other ones that had come before.

SH: Oh, absolutely, she was.

TS: Not like some of the other ones who had come before her. And did you have—now, do you have any favorite songs—you like music, so I gotta hear what kind of songs you liked to hear.

SH: Oh, you know, there were lots of war songs.

TS: Yeah.

SH: And I just liked them all.

TS: Did you do a lot of singing?

SH: No, I did more playing.

TS: The piano playing, that's right. You did a lot of piano playing. Now, you—well, tell me a little bit, then, about this decision you had to make to either stay in or get out. So how did that come about?

SH: Well, the day came when I had to make the decision. That was it, that was the deadline.

TS: And you'd been going back and forth?

SH: Yeah, so—and that day, I just said “I'm going home.”

TS: Now, what tilted the balance for you?

SH: I don't know.

TS: You just kind of—

SH: Yeah.

TS: And you said you had a job offer to teach? Where was that at?

SH: Oh, yeah. In Gastonia.

TS: Gastonia.

SH: Sixth grade.

TS: Yeah.

SH: Which is what I taught all the years I taught.

TS: How many years did you teach?

SH: Twenty-two.

TS: How about that. Now, you'd said in showing me some of the pictures, you showed me that picture of that paratrooper, and so you knew a lot of boys that were in the service?

SH: But he was a boy from Swannanoa.

TS: From your hometown.

SH: And we graduated high school together.

TS: Do you want to talk about him a little? Because we talked about it a little before, the tape wasn't turned on.

SH: Well, he was a very good friend. That's enough.

TS: Yeah, okay. And he—so you got out of the WAAC, and how do you feel like the whole time, you said the population treated you good, how about—did you have mostly female or male supervisors? Do you remember?

SH: I don't remember that we had—I expect they were more male than female. I know where I worked, it was male. I don't know any more than that.

TS: And you had—you got one promotion in that year that you were in, right?

SH: Yeah.

TS: Well, that's just a year, that's not too bad.

SH: To E-5[?].

TS: T5? Yeah. And so you felt you were treated—do you feel like you were treated good?

SH: Oh, sure. Yeah, I was—I was not worried about being treated wrong. I never thought that. I was treated very well, and felt very good about being in the army. I didn't have any whatever.

TS: Now, did you ever say “Oh, darn it, I should have stayed in?”

SH: No.

TS: You always said—

SH: No, once I got out and made the decision I was all right. Because I went straight to a job, and—where I taught for four years, and then I came to High Point, that was in '46, and then I met Byron the first month I was here, and we were married four years later.

TS: [chuckles] How about that.

SH: Took him a while.

TS: [laughs] Yeah, four years later, I guess so.

SH: Well, back in those days, we just—you know, I was having a good time, I wasn't dating just one man. [chuckles]

TS: So you had to work—he had to work for it, then, didn't he?

SH: Yeah, he did.

TS: Well, now, just finishing up on the war, do you remember the end of the war? I mean, there was an end in Europe first.

SH: Yeah. VJ—no, VE Day. I don't really remember a lot about that except the pictures I've seen, you know, of the nurse and the sailor.

TS: The big kiss. Yeah.

SH: I don't remember where I was, I don't remember much about that.

TS: Do you remember when Roosevelt died?

SH: Yes, and I remember going to the train thing and seeing Eleanor Roosevelt go through on the train.

TS: Going back to Washington. How about the dropping of—Hiroshima and Nagasaki, do you remember that?

SH: I remember that, and this trouble they have in Japan now has made me wonder more and more, or think more and more, about that, how terrible it was. And you wonder what would have happened if they hadn't dropped the bomb. The war would have lasted longer and we would have lost more people. But because we dropped it, it was better for us, the United States, than it was for Japan, because they're the ones that suffered. You know, it's one of those—and being a Quaker now, I just somehow or other have mixed feelings about that.

TS: Yes.

SH: So, I don't know. I know I'm—in the long run, I'm glad that the war didn't last as long as it would have.

TS: If we hadn't have dropped it, yeah. Because then we would have had a lot of our boys over there. Well, what'd you—we talked a little bit about your coming back to civilian life, and you've been—so you spent about a year in the—

SH: Yeah.

TS: Would you consider yourself an independent person before you went into the military at all?

SH: Yeah, or I wouldn't have gone. I was one of these, that I—I was not a homebody, I wanted to get out and see the world.

TS: And you saw some of it.

SH: I did, saw Washington D.C. [laughs]

TS: That's right. And the basement of the Pentagon, which not a lot of people have seen. That's true. Well, did you—do you think your time in the military influenced your life in any way?

SH: Well, I'm sure that it did, but I can't tell you just exactly why I think that, but I'm sure it did have some influence. But then I came home and married a Quaker, which is entirely against their—

TS: Oh, you mean being in the military.

SH: Yeah. But that didn't seem to matter to Byron, because I was out.

TS: Well, now, but the work that you did in the OSS [Office of Strategic Services], how do you feel about that? I mean, because that's like pioneering type work for—especially—I mean, for anyone, but for women, too.

SH: Yeah. Well, I just—it was just a matter of course, that's what I did.

TS: But some people would say that you were, you know, like a trailblazer in that.

SH: Oh, I don't think—[if] I hadn't been doing it, somebody else would have. I mean, I don't feel that it was—and yet, it was important that it was done. I do feel that.

TS: But it also showed that women could do that kind of work.

SH: Yeah.

TS: Too, at that level.

SH: That's right.

TS: What do—have any of your children—well, you're Quaker, so probably, I don't know—

SH: No, my children and the military—they are, what do you call, conscientious objectors.

TS: I see. What if one of them had said “Oh, I'd like to join the military.” What do you think—I know, you have that—the background with the Quakers.

SH: Well, my husband was one of these people that—he—what’s the word. A lot of people who were going into the war or wanted to be conscientious objectors came to Byron to help them deal with the—

TS: Oh, during the war? I see.

SH: He was very much against the war, and would not have gone—he would have, if he would have—

TS: In World War II?

SH: Yes. If he had had to, he would have—he would not have gone. He would have had to do whatever they made conscientious objectors do.

TS: So he didn’t get drafted or anything?

SH: No, he didn’t get drafted. If he had, he would have gone on. I mean, he would have not gone and taken whatever they wanted him to do. You know, they had to do work. I know he had a cousin that became a firefighter, and the same one worked in a mental hospital up in Virginia, and you know, they put them in places like that, and they’re not pleasant places to be.

TS: So as a conscientious objector, it’s not that they just “Okay, fine,” they had to—

SH: No, if you’re a conscientious objector, you—if you really are one, then you will [telephone rings] take it, do what they asked you to do. [unclear]

TS: I’ll pause this for a second. [recording paused]—back on again since that. Okay, so we got the ringing to stop there for a second. Well, that’s interesting about the conscientious objector side of it. So did you—you probably never talked all that much in your—

SH: I’ve never talked about it very much.

TS: No? Just because of the environment, the—

SH: Well, I just—I just never—being a Quaker, it’s just not one of the things that I went out and spread around.

TS: Put a banner “I’m a former veteran”, yeah, that sort of thing, sure. But you did that—

SH: A lot of people didn’t know it, not that I was ashamed of it.

TS: Right.

SH: I’ve never been ashamed of it, it’s just that it was against the Quakerly things.

TS: Right. But you did that before you became a Quaker, too.

SH: Yeah, that's right.

TS: Well, we're almost to the end, I've got a few more questions for you. I was going to ask you what you thought about Truman. You told me what you thought about FDR.

SH: Well, he's the one that made the decision to drop the bomb. I think he was a feisty president. [chuckles]

TS: Feisty in what way, do you think?

SH: Well, he did it Truman's way, and that was the way it was. And he came up with—I thought he was a good president. I liked him.

TS: Yeah.

SH: He was not quite like all the other presidents we had, he was not a lawyer or anything like that, he did it Truman's way. Anyway, I liked him.

TS: That's an interesting way to put it, did it Truman's way. And you're right, yeah, he came from a different background, true. Yup. Well, what do you think, today, since some of the—women in the military today, the roles that they play, like we have fighter pilots and—

SH: I think it's good, if they want to do it. And if they want to get into combat, that's—I wouldn't do it, I wouldn't want to. But—and if I had thought at the time I went in that I would be doing something like that, I wouldn't have gone in.

TS: Right.

SH: But a lot of them want to do those things.

TS: So as long as, you think, they can do it, then it's fine?

SH: Yeah, if they want to do it, then it's fine.

TS: And is there anything that you think is off-limits for women to do in the military?

SH: Not if they want to do it.

TS: Well, have you had—it's been a long time since you've been in.

SH: Yeah.

TS: Was there any particular experience that you remember that you really enjoyed, like if you went somewhere, you—

SH: Just my time in Washington.

TS: Yeah.

SH: That was really—I was lucky in that I got to go to Washington, and that was enjoyable.

TS: Was it stressful? Was it a stressful-type job?

SH: No, not really.

TS: No?

SH: Well, in a way it was, but I mean, I had to work when I was working. But I didn't have to think about it once I got out.

TS: When you're done, you're done? Your day's left back in the office—in the basement, I guess.

SH: Yeah. In the basement. You know, it's five stories high and we were on the bottom. It's five stories high, five rings around it.

TS: So you—so the basement, you'd be like—

SH: In the very bottom. [chuckles]

TS: Did you get to see any of the other—you know, the bigwigs there, going to any functions like that, or?

SH: Well, I can't remember whether I did, but I'm sure I saw them, you know. They would have been walking around. It's where the Defense Department was, down in the basement, that would have—that's where their offices were.

TS: So they were just walking around down there, too.

SH: Yeah.

TS: But you were probably so busy you didn't—it's not like you were having socials.

SH: No, because by the time I finished work, I was ready to leave. And we were picked up just in time to get to work, so we didn't have a lot of time to mill around and do a lot.

TS: Well, for people who have never been in the service, you know, in any generation, is there anything that you would like to say to them about your service, at all, about the time that you spent in that maybe they wouldn't understand because they haven't experienced it?

SH: I think it's a personal choice, and it would be up to you to decide whether that's what you want to do or not. I chose to do it, but there's some people that wouldn't, and I'm not sorry, because I enjoyed most of it.

TS: Yeah. Did you like your uniform?

SH: Oh yeah, because I was a celebrity! [laughing]

TS: That's right! That's right. Well, that's all the formal questions that I have, Sarah. Is there anything else you might like to add?

SH: I don't know of any.

TS: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate you talking to me today.

SH: You're welcome.

TS: I'll go ahead and shut it off.

[End of Interview]