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11-11-2004

## Interview with Ethel Hughes Muhvich

Ethel Hughes Muhvich

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### Recommended Citation

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS  
VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview VHP #037  
MUHVICH, Ethel Hughes**

**MUHVICH, Ethel Hughes**

*Enlisted:* 1943 July – 1946 October 8

*Interviewed:* November 11, 2004

*Interviewer:* Lauren J. Weldishofer

*Index by:* Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

*Length:* 01:33:54

Abstract: In her November 11, 2004 interview with Lauren Weldishofer, Ethel Hughes Muhvich recalls her time in service during WWII. Muhvich describes why she enlisted, what her assignment was, and why her generation was the greatest. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: WAC, accounting, Edgewood Arsenal, country clubs, recreation, basic training, parades

**Interview Session (November 11, 2004): Digital File**

**Time      Keywords**

00:00:00    *Start of Interview/Interviewer's Introduction*

00:00:30    *Question:* War? Branch of service? *Answer:* WWII. WAC (Women's Army Corp).

00:00:40    *Question:* Rank? *Answer:* Corporal.

00:00:45    *Question:* Where did you serve? *Answer:* Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland.

00:00:55    *Question:* Living when enlisted? *Answer:* Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Living with family. EM talks about her father. The Army asked EM's father to come to Mobile, Alabama and cut lumber to build houses. EM's father couldn't go, because EM's mother was sick.

00:04:41    *Question:* Why did you join? *Answer:* EM's brothers were in the service. Two brothers in the service.

00:05:58    *Question:* Why did you choose WAC? *Answer:* They took women.

00:06:12    *Question:* First day in training? *Answer:* Learning how to march. EM caught on fast.

- Marched in parades, while in the WAC – Baltimore and Philadelphia.
- 00:06:55 *Question:* What was it like being a woman in the armed services? *Answer:* Men in the army were gentleman. Women in army were ladies. Not like the men and women in Abu Ghraib. EM discusses trying to get home on Friday afternoon. EM writes to President Carter about shared experiences in the service.
- 00:10:18 *Question:* Training? *Answer:* Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. Oldest brother stationed there at one point. Captain Martin, she wanted everything “gung ho.” Captain Martin would complement soldiers on a job well done. Up at 6am doing exercises. Marched and kept in shape.
- 00:13:40 *Question:* Job? *Answer:* Kept books at headquarters. Sometimes caught a ride with the general. In basic training, all awakened by drafted Puerto Rican girls – EM says the Puerto Rican girls knew English, but they didn’t want to speak it, also didn’t follow the rules.
- 00:16:05 *Question:* Memorable experiences of work? *Answer:* Chemical explosion where a lot of people were burned. Trying to flag people down to take burn victims to the hospital. EM didn’t know any victims.
- 00:17:40 *Question:* Husband? *Answer:* Met at Edgewood. Husband stationed at Edgewood and “in charge of a lot of people.” Staff Sergeant – had to ship people out.
- 00:20:00 *Question:* How did you and your husband meet? *Answer:* At an officer’s club.
- 00:20:30 *Question:* Served together? *Answer:* Yes
- 00:20:49 *Question:* How did you stay in touch with family? *Answer:* Letters. Sometimes a telephone call.
- 00:21:15 *Question:* Home on leave? *Answer:* Yes, but didn’t have much leave.
- 00:21:31 *Question:* Stressful? *Answer:* No. EM says it was easy.
- 00:21:54 *Question:* Any pressure being a woman? *Answer:* No. Remembers guard and security. EM worked in Mississippi once (before her service) and remembers seeing Ingalls Shipbuilding Company making ships for the war. One ship took off and encountered a German submarine – ship back in the harbor. The beach in Mississippi was patrolled. EM recalls a plane going down in the Gulf of Mexico and never being found.
- 00:28:15 *Question:* Living condition in Edgewood? *Answer:* “Beautiful barracks.” Day rooms.

- Fort Oglethorpe – beautiful dining halls. Better food there than anywhere else. Everything was run well. Gunpowder country club, officer clubs, etc. “Nice place to be, if you had to be in the army.”
- 00:30:50 *Question: Keepsakes? Answer: St. Christopher medal on her tags. Good friends with three other girls – looked after each other. EM discusses departing with her friends at the end of their service. Shares stories of her friends.*
- 00:39:30 **[no question]** EM was called to march in Washington DC.
- 00:39:53 *Question: Good experience? Answer: Yes.*
- 00:40:25 *Question: Sisters? Answer: Stayed at home. Youngest sister married to a soldier. Oldest sister knitted clothes for army. EM talks about people in the war always helping and learning. “If there wasn’t something we knew how to do, we would learn it pretty fast.” EM talks about almost starving to death in Mississippi before the war – everyone worked, but it was hard to find food. “Greatest generation.” Grew up on a farm in Mississippi.*
- 00:45:25 **[no question]** EM’s response to negative viewpoints about veterans. Admiral Kimmel blamed for Japanese bombing Pearl Harbor. Manning Kimmel. WRHI.
- 00:47:50 *Question: Grandsons interested in military? Answer: Maybe. One grandson went to the School of Art and Design in Savannah. Other has a job.*
- 00:49:50 *Question: Hard to explain your service? Answer: Yes. EM says she never thought she would live this long. Stories about father and his craftsmanship.*
- 00:54:40 *Question: Pranks? Answer: Yes. Somebody sent dead flowers to a soldier.*
- 00:56:18 **[no question]** Physically in shape.
- 00:56:50 *Question: Pictures? Answer: Friend took a lot of photos. Dances in the service.*
- 00:59:35 *Question: Entertainers? Answer: No. They had to entertain themselves. Army bands played for dances.*
- 01:01:18 *Question: Service ended? Answer: Recalls discharged. Fort Dix, New Jersey. EM recalls getting vaccinations while being discharged. EM recalls women administering shot and telling her to sit down. EM’s retort.*
- 01:04:45 *Question: What did you do after the service? Answer: Got an apartment in Edgewood Arsenal. Not a lot of possessions. Married while in the service. Married in a pink*

dress that she wore in the service.

- 01:07:15 *Question:* Any family at your wedding? *Answer:* No. Brother still abroad in England. People reluctant to travel. Husband eventually went to Mississippi to meet EM's family. Hard to travel then.
- 01:09:05 *Question:* Work or school after War? *Answer:* Worked in an office. Husband didn't go to school. Husband worked at a chemical company near Edgewood, MD.
- 01:12:35 *Question:* Join veterans organizations? *Answer:* No. Talks about family.
- 01:19:00 *Question:* Where did you live after Edgewood? *Answer:* Bel Air, Maryland – bought land and built a house.
- 01:21:30 *Question:* Live with other military families in Edgewood? *Answer:* Everyone separated after the war.
- 01:22:20 *Question:* Reunions? *Answer:* No. Just kept in touch with letters. Shares stories.
- 01:25:15 *Question:* Other stories? *Answer:* Youngest brother who came back from the war. Injured his back badly. Husband's heritage – interest in skiing.
- 01:33:54 ***End of interview***