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Interview with Margaret Howell Heath

Margaret Howell Heath

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LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview VHP #072
HOWELL HEATH, Margaret

HOWELL HEATH, Margaret

Enlisted: 1943 June – 1946 March

Interviewed: October 12, 2006

Interviewer: Nicole L. Wilson

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

Length: 00:59:58

Abstract: In her October 12, 2006 interview with Nicole L. Wilson, Margaret Howell Heath explains why she joined the WAVES and shares her experiences being stationed in San Francisco. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Navy, WAVES, library, food, boot camp

Interview Session (October 12, 2006): Digital File

Time	Keywords
00:00:00	<i>Question:</i> Military service? <i>Answer:</i> Teaching school in Pickens, SC. Went to Atlanta and enlisted in the Navy. MH had to be sent back home to gain weight. June 1, 1943 enlisted. Boot camp at Hunter College in the Bronx. Sent to Cedar Falls, IA because MH could type. Assigned to Naval training in San Francisco.
00:03:20	<i>Question:</i> Overseas? <i>Answer:</i> No. Sending WAVES to Alaska and Hawaii, but MH never approved to go. Served under a captain in the Navy who did not approve of women in the service. MH says she was fortunate in her assignment.
00:06:50	<i>Question:</i> Highest rank? <i>Answer:</i> Petty officer first class. “That’s really like a glorified secretary.” MH attributes this rank to her experience at Winthrop.
00:07:20	<i>Question:</i> Memorable story? <i>Answer:</i> Interviewed Madame Chiang Kai-Shek. Worked for a newspaper. Home on leave – got a message that the FDR died. FDR’s train draped in black. WAVES living quarters in San Francisco. Remembers a black out in San Francisco.
00:14:25	[no question] MH describes her work in the naval library. Checked out training films and tutorials. The WAVES living quarters was taken over by the marines and is now a hotel for people in the service. Women couldn’t attend happy hour in the living quarters.

- 00:17:40 [no question] People MH worked with. Holidays. MH offered a job in Richmond, Virginia in the State Board of Education. MH took the job.
- 00:19:00 *Question:* Choose San Francisco? *Answer:* Assigned. No choice. Had to get permission to travel. MH talks about traveling from Chicago to Cedar Falls. MH describes arriving to school at Cedar Falls. MH received demerits her first day at Cedar Falls for being out of uniform and sunbathing. There were less than 100 WAVES when MH started, and when she left in 1946, there were over 4,000 WAVES.
- 00:24:40 *Question:* Why did you join? *Answer:* Everyone was patriotic at the time. MH felt pulled into it. MH took first aid courses at Winthrop. MH interested in seeing the world. MH talks about a friend who sewed parachutes and stayed with the military after WWII. MH refers to a picture of her brother.
- 00:32:40 [no question] MH and a friend wanted to move out of the WAVES living quarters. Needed to get approval from a male superior to do so. MH discusses leave. 24-hour leave or 48-hour leave. MH explored California.
- 00:35:08 [no question] Winthrop training enabled MH to end up working in the Naval library. MH goes over military language. Office had a softball team. Appendix removed on Treasure Island. MH assigned two-weeks duty on Mare Island. "That's my overseas duty." Refers to a picture of MH in New York.
- 00:39:35 [no question] Boot camp. Studied the history of the navy. "I really did not know how to study until I got in the Navy." MH felt like she was a better teacher after the service.
- 00:41:05 [no question] MH refers to article with Madame Chiang Kai-Shek. Ration book. MH gave gas and cigarette rations to sailors.
- 00:43:44 *Question:* Food? *Answer:* "It was alright." MH remembers how they prepared eggs. Auditorium at WAVES housing. Frank Sinatra.
- 00:49:50 [no question] Stayed in touch with fellow WAVES. Describes dog tags.
- 00:52:40 [no question] MH summarizes her experience. Compares war today to WWII. "I knew God and mother were watching me."
- 00:59:58 *End of Interview*