

The Ft. Kearny Genealogical Society's
WOMEN IN THE MILITARY" PROJECT 1998

Lois Rahmann's taped interview of
EVE SPENCER OSTERBERG
October 30, 1998, at Eve's home in Kearney.

Eve, when did you enter the military?

September of 1943. I was the first enlistee from Rapid City after they changed from the WAAC to the WAC.

What led to your decision to go into the service?

I was in Rapid City at the air base, and all my friends were being transported overseas and I could see no reason not to.

What was the world situation at the time you were in the service?

There was war in the South Pacific and all over the world.

Were you aware of and involved in political issues of the day?

Well, my family were Republicans and voted Republican, and yes, I was patriotic with it.

And did you have strong patriotic feelings?

Yes, I think so.

Did your family have a tradition of military service?

My brother was in the service and after I joined, my sister joined the Marines the day she was 21.

When you joined the military, do you remember your parent's reaction? What was your mother's reaction?

I didn't ask them; I didn't tell them. I just simply sent the induction papers home and my dad wrote back saying, "We were wondering when you were going to do this." And my mother, I think, was probably more concerned about my brother in the Pacific than she was me joining the military. She did have eczema during the war—nervousness.

Do you think that going to the military was a significant break in your past?

Let's put it gently. It was quite different from civilian life.

Was joining the military the important psychological break from your way of life up to that time?

Well, yes and no. In the Army they gave us a schedule for when we ate and what we wore



That is why we couldn't talk about it.

Do you think that recounting some of the experiences here and now might be of some future value to your family?

Oh, I don't know...maybe in 50 more years. I am quite interested in my grandfather's Civil War letters. I type most of them, and...but they aren't too excited about it. No. Can we get into detail about who officers were and what they had done? Just like the girls who you knew, if you had some officers that you really remember and think something of?

I do remember.

You go ahead and tell us. Who were the people in your unit?

I had different units for the most part after Walter Reed Hospital. My assignment was with the Historical Division in Europe, and I typed for all types of people there. We typed the history of the war, like probably the most important book that I worked on quite regularly, for a long time, was "Bastogne, the First Eight Days." And, when I got the copy of the book...when I came back to New York, I went into the bookstore and asked for the book. He pulled off the cover and in the introduction the colonel had credited me with help for finding information for the book. So I was in the book, and I was really thrilled about it. I had many...In the Historical Division there were more college graduates than there were in any other unit because they chose the historians that were teachers at the University of Chicago, and...

Who was your best friend in the service?

Well, I had lots of good friends, but I think it was one of the officers in our unit. And exactly how long were you in the service?

Two years, and then I stayed six months as a civilian in the same job.

Tell one of your army stories that you are famous for in the family.

Well, there are lots of things I'm not telling the family, but when we were in partial training in London (getting ready to go to Normandy), we were in fatigues and went through rough training there and the Major came in to make sure that we really wanted to go, and he didn't want a bunch of us to chicken out because we had our jobs to do. And, we asked "What's it like?" He said, "I don't know; it hasn't been captured yet." We were in Normandy long before St. Lo was taken.

We got there and all I remember was Bastille Day. Our captain knew that we were going to be over there, and she thought we should learn the French national anthem and how to sing it, because the civilians might be there to meet us. She had no concept of the thousands and thousands of GI's that had stormed over those beaches in military transport. Even at that time they weren't announcing the arrival of a group of women. That I will always remember. She meant well and we all agreed; we thought we would meet people, but there weren't any civilians. What was the worst thing about the military service?

Shots!

Is there anything else important about your experiences in the military and their effects on you that I've forgotten to ask you?

My life now is full of military. I've been Commander for two years at the VFW, and the Commander at the Legion for one year, and the District Commander for VFW, and with Nebraska Women Veteran—I've met with them many times. And, I've even joined a Daughters Reunion Veterans. We do Color Guard. When we were Commander at VFW we started keeping track of the number of funerals we worked as Color Guard and it is about 110. That is with Legion and VFW together. And I've been at 99% of those funerals.

Eve, I thank you for letting me interview you and I hope that you continue with your family and all your friends and we are really proud to have had you in our service.

THE END

