

INTERVIEW

Travis D. Woody

YEAR

2006

GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: Travis Woody

DATE: November 18, 2005

PLACE: Cimarron, Kansas

INTERVIEWER: Joyce Sullentrop

PROJECT SERIES: Veterans Oral History Project for Gray County

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Travis Dewey graduated from University of Arkansas in 1941 and taught math in high school until enlisting in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corp which later became Women's Army Corp in 1943. After basic training, she was sent to a base in Aberdeen where she served for twenty-eight months, until discharge. She used her math skills as she worked as a computer, helping to develop locations for war zone bomb drops. She returned to her mother's home and taught math and science until her marriage to Howard Woody. She moved to Kansas and raised her family in Kansas where her husband had work.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Life before enlisting in the service and during deployment to the eastern United States and her service life there. Travis's return to civilian life and how the service affected her life after her return were discussed as well as her early years of beginning her family in Kansas.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW: none

SOUND RECORDINGS: 60 minute tape

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 1 hour

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 26 pages

ORAL HISTORY
Woody, Travis
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Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)
Interviewee: Travis Woody (TW)
Tape 1 of 1
Side A

JS - Dewey-Woody, OK.

TW - It wasn't Woody at that time.

JS - Okay, it was just Travis Dewey. When the war started—when the war was declared in 1939, how old were you and do you remember what you, your family or your relatives thought about the beginning of the war?

TW - I would have been twenty years old in 1939 and I don't remember what the family felt.

JS - Were you aware that there would be a war?

TW - Oh yes. We were aware if it.

JS - And what were you doing? You were out of high school.

TW - I was in college.

JS - And where were you in college?

TW - University of Arkansas.

JS - And were you going for a particular degree?

TW - Bachelor of Science in Education.

JS - All right, and you continued going to the college.

TW - I graduated in 1941.

JS - 1941. Where were you when you heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

TW - I was in Dover, Arkansas. I was teaching there. Of course, we didn't have TV in those days, but you would see everybody gathered around the radio and hear.

JS - And do you remember what you thought or felt at that time?

TW - We didn't know what to think. We knew things were getting out of hand, so-to-speak.

JS - And probably that things would change for the nation. All right, when did you enter the WAAC?

TW - It would have been May of 1943. I enlisted in January, but I had to finish teaching.

JS - So Pearl Harbor happened and you kept teaching for a couple of years after that.

TW - There were two years that I taught; 1941-1942 term and 1942-1943 term.

JS - Why did you decide to get out of teaching and join?

TW - Just wanted to. I don't know of any particular reason, but my father was a veteran.

JS - Was that from World War One?

TW - Yes, and I didn't have any brothers. My father died when I was five years old, so I kind of wanted to keep the service in the family.

JS - Did you know what you would be doing?

TW - I had no idea.

JS - How did you join? Did you go to some city?

TW - I went to Little Rock to the recruiting office there.

JS - By yourself?

TW - Yes.

JS - What did your mother think?

TW - She was for it. She said if she were younger, she would like to do that.

JS - All right, and what did you have to do when you joined?

TW - I went back and finished the term of teaching. I got my orders to go, and reported right at the end of May. I don't remember the exact date.

JS - And where did you report?

TW - I went to Little Rock for that and then we were sent to Oglethorpe, Maryland, on a troop train.

JS - How many other women.....

TW - Well, the car was full and we had a month to five weeks in Oglethorpe.

JS - And was that training of some kind?

TW - Basic training.

JS - Could you describe that?

TW - Well, we learned to march and trained Army style. I mean, it's different to training today. We learned basic training.

JS - So there was a physical component of it where you had to march.

TW - Yes.

JS - And be physically fit.

TW - Oh, yes.

JS - Well, What kind of uniform did you wear?

TW - Oh, it was khaki; skirt, shirt and jacket.

JS - Hat?

TW - Yes, there was a crazy hat. I hated that hat.

JS - What was the hat like?

TW - It was a cap with a visor on it.

JS - And why didn't you like it?

TW - I thought they looked icky (laugh). And then later they changed them to a little cap that.....

JS - That folded up?

TW - Yes.

JS - Was it because you were older? You were not right out of high school, was it hard to follow orders?

TW - It wasn't for me.

JS - And during the basic training were you primarily just on base? You couldn't go off base?

TW - Well, we could go off base on the weekend at that time.

JS - Did you know what you were being trained to do?

TW - No idea where we would go.

JS - And then, when did you find out where you were going to go?

TW - Well, when I enlisted and went in for the basic training, one of the officers looked at my records and said, "I know where you are going" but he didn't say anymore, and when I got my orders it was to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.

JS - What had he seen in your records? That you were a teacher?

TW - Math. I was a math major.

JS - Before we turned this recorder on you said it was called the Women's.....

TW - Women's Army Auxiliary Corp.

JS - And at what point did it become The Women's Army Corp.

TW - Early August, 1943.

JS - Did it just change the name or did it change the purpose?

TW - It didn't change its purpose, but we had to go through a physical like the men do.

JS - So you didn't have to do a physical before?

TW - Oh, we had to do a physical but nothing like that.

JS - And do you know the reasoning behind that?

TW - Just Army regulations.

JS - Had the Auxiliary Corp been organized for quite a while?

TW - I don't remember; it started about the time the war started.

JS - You were a private going in?

TW - Yes.

JS - In basic training, there was a sergeant?

TW - Well, we had to go farther than basic training to get promoted.

JS - And you found the physical for WAC was more like what the men did.

TW - More like the men did.

JS - All right, so you found out you were going to Aberdeen, and did you know what you would be doing there?

TW - No.

JS - Were there any others from your group that went there?

TW - I don't remember. There weren't more than one or two if there were, but there were others that went, maybe not from our group.

JS - And how did you go to Aberdeen?

TW - On a train.

JS - Was this a troop train?

TW - No. This was not a troop train. We got sent on a regular train.

JS - Basically, what did you take with you?

TW - Well, there was a list of things. We took the clothes that we wore on the way to basic. We were issued our uniforms after we got there. And personal items as combs, toothbrushes and so on.

JS - Had you traveled much before then?

TW- Not a lot.

JS - Was it a big adventure for you?

TW - It was a big adventure for me.

JS - Do you have a particular memory or story?

TW - They told us when we went in that if we missed any time in basic training we would have to make it up. Our GP wasn't there, and we failed the locker when they came in for inspection, and I was coughing and I was ordered to go on sick call right then. They stuck me in the hospital for a week and that didn't help. Wasn't anything wrong, but just allergies. I told them. I missed a week of basic training and I didn't make it up.

JS - So what happened?

TW - They had my orders cut before I would have done that.

JS - So you had to go back and do a week then?

TW - No, I never.

JS - What was being in the hospital like?

TW - It was different from a regular hospital in that if we were able to be up we cleaned our own area and made our own beds and so on and so forth.

JS - Was it an Army hospital?

TW - Yes, it was on the base.

JS - What was it like living on a base? Were you in a barracks?

TW - Yes, I don't remember how many were in that basic training. When I got to Aberdeen, we had about seventy-five in each barracks. The lower floor had twenty-five plus two Cadbury rooms.

JS - Cadbury rooms. What was that?

TW - Well, non-commissioned officers had Cadbury rooms; corporals, sergeants and so on. Most of the corporals were in with the rest of us. There were seventy-five upstairs but the lower floors had the latrines, laundry room and the furnace room was there. The day room was there, where we could go down and relax.

JS - Were you ever relaxed?

TW - Oh, Yeah! (Laugh) We had a lot of fun.

JS - What kind of fun did you have?

TW - We got together and talked a lot and shared impressions and there were tricks played on one another occasionally.

JS - Like what kind of tricks?

TW - Short sheeting beds and what have you. (Laugh)

JS - Probably no one even short sheets anymore. What was the food like?

TW - Our food was good.

JS - OK. Now this was a base that had been there before the war?

TW - The base had been there all along but the women hadn't been there very long. They were new in there.

JS - And you went there to teach?

TW - They had me as a computer. A computer in those days was a person. You didn't have computers.

JS - Right, but you were given the job of what computers do now?

TW - Similar.

JS - So, what did you do specifically?

TW - Well one thing, we had to make out a job description for the company and I said I had to multiply and divide and sometimes take square root and they brought it back and said that would not do.

JS - So they made you write some more things.

TW - I made a kind of flowery description.(Laugh).

JS - But basically you would figure things?

TW - Well, we would get the data from the (unknown) bombing section. And we made the chart that the pilots used to drop the bombs.

JS - So you would take all the data and.....?

TW - Put it together at various altitudes and so on and so forth.

JS - For people that were training?

TW - For the pilots.

JS - That were In Europe or where?

TW - Europe or wherever.

JS - Was that an involved project?

TW - Mainly, those in charge of the department usually decided what you did and most of it was broken down into parts and they put the parts together. There was one girl that did the drafting for the tables and put the data in the tape that would be sent to the pilots.

JS - This is all by hand?

TW - All by hand. Now, they had what they called an IBM machine and it could do in about twenty minutes, after it was set up, what it took about twenty of us three weeks to do. But it took about three days to set it up for each job.

JS - I see, to reprogram it?

TW - Yes, to reprogram it. And they checked what we did.

JS - For accuracy?

TW - Yes.

JS - Were you always accurate?

TW - Usually. If not, you got back to it. We did have one rush job that we had to get finished. I forget how much time we had, but we were working long hours and we got the tables finished and the pilot was there to pick them up and he flew into a region that was difficult to get to. When the IBM machine checked there had been an error. Not a big one, apparently, but they warned the pilot not to use those charts as they were no good. A couple of months later, he came back and we said we hoped he did not use the charts that were not any good. He said it was all they had, so they used them anyway and they worked.

JS - The machine was not right?

TW - Well, the machine knew they could have been more accurate.

JS - Did you know when you were doing this the area that the pilot would be going to or did they just give you raw data like altitudes and things like that?

TW - And wind speeds and what-have-you.

JS - The pilots, then, were they already over there or were they going over?

TW - Most of them were over there.

JS - And how was it sent to them?

TW - I don't know. I just know about the one who took it.

JS - And did you do the same type of work all the time? You said it was divided into parts. Did you just do one part each time?

TW - We were handed a sheet with one step's data on it and we worked it out and turned it in. It might be a different step each time to work and fill out.

JS - So you were actually using the skills you had before you joined.

TW - To some extent, anyway.

JS - Did you work five days a week or six days?

TW - We usually worked five and one half. We worked until noon on Saturday.

JS - And what would you do on weekends?

TW - Maybe we went to town or we could have a weekend pass and maybe go to some cities around. We went to Philadelphia quite a bit. Baltimore is about forty-five minutes. Philadelphia is about one and a half hours on the train. Washington D.C., was a couple of hours and New York City was about three hours.

JS - So you got to see a lot of that part of the United States.

TW - That part, yes.

JS - Was that a fun part of it?

TW - It was.

JS - And you would go into some of the cities and what? Eat dinner and go to some

TW - Go to a show or something.

JS - Did you go as a group?

TW - You could go as a group or by yourself if you wanted to.

JS - How much were you paid?

TW - I netted \$50 a month and when I got out I was a sergeant and I was making \$78 each month.

JS - Was that adequate money. What did you have to buy?

TW - Not much, your toothpaste and soaps and what-have-you.

JS - Did you stay at this particular base the whole time you were in?

TW - Except for detached service in Philadelphia. We had math for four months.

JS - Tech service?

TW - No, detached. We went to school at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. There were two groups on the swing that alternated. We studied math. Some of the girls in that group had no math, even in high school. They had to be high school graduates, and some of them had graduated with no math. I can't imagine it. There were two or three of us who were math majors in college, and I learned a lot more about teaching methods than I did about math. (Both laugh). We had a teacher that taught from the start with algebra 1. She taught algebra 1 and geometry; analytic geometry, solid geometry, and even some calculus. And she did it without a text-book and I saw no reason why anybody could fail to get what she was telling us.

JS - Now, you were sent there because you would use those skills back on the job?

TW - Well, it depended on which part of it you were doing and we were also working as computers.

JS - And they actually called you computers?

TW - Oh, yes.

JS - Interesting. That was called detached service, but then you spent until you got out at that one particular base?

TW - Right.

JS - And did the same job, or the same general job?

TW - Same general job.

JS - Did you feel you were contributing to the war?

TW - Probably not so much until that pilot came back and talked. Then we felt like we probably were.

JS - So this was an Army base and it was the first time that women had been stationed at this base. The obvious question is; how were you treated as women?

TW - Well, most of them just accepted us as we were, but of course, there were some that resented us.

J - Did they say things to you?

TW - We had to walk by one of the men's areas to go to work. There was one master sergeant that got in the middle of the sidewalk and you had to get off the sidewalk in order to pass him. (Laugh)

JS - Did you intermingle with the troops that were there? Did they have social events?

TW - Oh, yes. The post was a large post. It was an ordinance post, primarily.

JS - I am assuming that some of you would date some of the men, or did you call it dating?

TW - Oh yeah. You could date anyone you wanted to except that the personnel were not supposed to associate with the officers.

JS - So, there weren't any real rules about it? You could do this or you couldn't do that except for that one?

TW - There were rules about everything. (Laugh)

JS - Of course there would be rules. Do you remember any rules that you thought were sort of ridiculous? Did you ever get in trouble for breaking the rules?

TW - Almost, but it wasn't really. I was on CQ one night.

JS - Now what's CQ?

TW - Charge of quarters. And there were always two non-coms in charge of quarters at night and the girl that was supposed to be there with me had to work. They gave her permission to work because I could handle it. A week or so later, I got a call from the commanding officer and she asked if I had taken a message for a certain person that night. I told her, "Yes, I did". I remembered the message and she said, "Did you take it to the barracks?" and I said, "No, I was there by myself and I couldn't leave the orderly room, and I sent it by somebody that was going." She said, "Oh, that's right. I had forgotten that."

JS - And you were in the orderly room and you just handled things?

TW - We handed out the off base passes and so-on and so-forth and weekend passes or whatever. And we were in charge of seeing that bed check was made at night. Everybody had to be there at ten o'clock, and if we had directions and took telephone calls because the barracks didn't have telephones, so you had to go to the orderly room or the day room to meet and entertain your friends. There was a PX on the post.

JS - And what would you purchase at the PX?

TW - All the essential things like toothpaste and soap and paper and pins and things that you would use.

JS - So you wrote home and you received mail.

TW - Oh, yes.

JS - Was there a mail room or they delivered it to your barracks?

TW - They had mail call during the noon hour everyday and if you weren't there, your mail was put on your bed.

JS - Were there other women doing other jobs on that base?

TW - Yes.

JS - What did some of them do?

TW - They test drove trucks. They worked with testing ammunition and so on. The small arms range was right across the fence from us. We heard the guns going off day and night.

JS - Would those women have been in your barracks also?

TW - They could have been.

JS - When you were doing CQ, the other young woman who was working, what was she doing at night?

TW - They had a rush job and she worked as a computer, I think. I am not sure, but there was something that had to be done and be finished.

JS - But normally you wouldn't have been working at night?

TW - No. We had what was called a night shift which came on at four o'clock and worked until twelve or twelve-thirty, I guess it was. They had a thirty minute break for lunch.

JS - So you had two shifts working.

TW - The day was usually eight hours long. You had PT as soon as you got up every morning.

JS - Now, what's PT?

TW - Physical training or physical education.

JS - And what was that? What did you do?

TW - Exercises.

JS - All right. Now, did you always wear a skirt or did you wear pants sometimes?

TW - Well, the girls that did the test driving or worked out on the range somehow would wear coveralls, and those that worked in the offices wore skirts.

JS - What kind of shoes? And did you wear hose?

TW - We wore Army issue hose and shoes and the hose were cotton.

JS - Because there was no silk available during the war.

TW - Silk wasn't available.

JS - Did you like those?

TW - Hated them.

JS - Were they warm?

TW - Oh, yeah. They were warm.

JS - And what were the shoes like? Did they have a heel?

TW - They had a low heel. They were walking shoes. They had laces.

JS - And did you take care of your own uniform or did a laundry or cleaners on base do that?

TW - You could send your uniforms to the laundry and most of us sent shirts to the laundry. You could also wash things out in the laundry room.

JS - Could you wear makeup and jewelry?

TW - I don't remember much about it except that you might wear a ring; plain ring, nothing fancy. If you were married you wore a wedding ring.

JS - So there were married women?

TW - Oh yes.

JS - I guess I didn't realize that.

TW - There were several and their husbands were overseas.

JS - Not women with children?

TW - I don't know of any that had children. I'll take it back, I did know of one who had children but she and her husband were divorced and he had custody of the children.

JS - Did the young women come from all over the United States?

TW - All over.

JS - Did you make some good friends?

TW - Oh, yes.

JS - And did you stay in contact with them?

TW - Some of them. Yes. I still hear from one at Christmas.

JS - Oh, really?

TW - And she is even older than I am.

JS - So, through the years you have kept in contact.

TW - At Christmas time I always hear from Anne. And I kept in contact with Steve. Steve was our barracks sergeant and I kept in touch with her as long as she lived. And the girl that was next to me, I wish I could have kept in contact with her, but you know how things are, you drift apart. Another one I ran around with a lot. I didn't hear from her one Christmas. I sent her a Christmas card and after about three months it came back and I knew I'd never hear from that one again.

JS - Do you have a particular strong memory of, maybe some of the things that you did, either on or off the job that you would like to tell?

TW - I can't think of any right now.

JS - You moved up to be a sergeant.

TW - Yes.

JS - What was the process there?

TW - This was a new base for women, and more or less, they moved up as fast as they thought they could so I had been in about four or five months and I got corporal rating. I believe I was given a sergeant's rating about the time I had been in a year.

JS - You got the corporal rating. Do you know why you got that rating? Did you have to do certain things?

TW - Well, they more or less called me in charge of the military personnel in that department.

JS - Do you think it was because you were a little older than some of them or because you were skillful?

TW - I think it was because I applied myself and did my job.

JS - OK, good! And then within several months you were a sergeant. How did that change? I mean what did you do differently because you were a sergeant?

TW - I didn't do anything differently, really. I was still in charge of the military personnel in there but I outranked the corporals. There weren't very many of them in the department. I think six or seven at one time. They could use the hand.

JS - And it was all women, no men.

TW - No, I had some men there toward the end.

JS - And they were doing essentially the same thing?

TW - The same thing as we were.

JS - But you did get more money as a sergeant and you wore different stripes or something?

TW - Yes.

JS - Did you think it was good that you became a sergeant?

TW - Yes, I did.

JS - Your experience is quite different, of course.

TW - Quite different than the men's.

JS - Yes it is. Now let's see, did we talk about food?

TW - We had good food.

JS - There was a mess hall? You were with the men?

TW - No. Men could eat there if they were invited, if you wanted to take them, but it was for women.

JS - So basically you were segregated from men quite a bit.

TW - Yes.

JS - Did they warn you of the dangers of men?

TW - No. The only men or our post were garbage men and the men that tended the furnaces. We didn't have to tend our furnaces and they had to be out by nine o'clock.

JS - Now here was the post and there was a different section for men?

TW - A different area.

JS - OK. And you simply didn't mingle except at social activities or something like that. Did the base provide those social activities?

TW- Well, companies would have a party and there was, I can't remember.....

JS - You are doing fine. Would the USO bring.....?

TW - I don't remember the USO except once or twice they brought people in to a dance. The dances were in a central area where men and women were welcomed and there were programs put on occasionally.

JS - So, how did you spend your leisure time when you weren't working in the evening and weekends if you didn't go off base on a pass?

TW - You read or maybe got with someone to play cards of some kind.

JS - What kind of card game might you play?

TW - You could play any card game you wanted to.

JS - Did you play poker?

TW - I never did. My husband tried to teach me one time after we were married.

JS - Never caught on, huh? Did you smoke or did a lot of the women smoke?

TW - Some of them did. I never did smoke. I never had the desire to.

JS - It was very popular wasn't it, to smoke?

TW - Yes.

JS - At the dances, what were some of the specific dances that you did, do you remember? No? Did you have to dress in uniform when you went?

TW - Oh, yes.

JS - So you were always in uniform. Even when you went on pass?

TW - Yes.

JS - Did you get sick of that uniform?

TW - Not particularly. It didn't matter to me.

JS - Did you have one or two uniforms that you rotated?

TW - I think we had two.

JS - And if your shoes would wear out you would be issued a new pair of shoes or with the hose?

TW - As for being issued any more shoes, we were issued two pair when we went in and I was in for twenty-eight months.

JS - They didn't wear out?

TW - No, they didn't wear out and we did a lot of marching, too.

JS - What was the purpose of the marching?

TW - Drill formation and so-on and when were in Philadelphia we participated in two or three parades where we marched quite a ways.

JS - Sort of patriotic parades?

TW - Yes. Raising money for selling bonds and stuff.

JS - You were able, then, to save your money?

TW - Or spend it if you wanted to. Some of them spent everything they got. I put mine in savings bonds.

JS - When you joined, did you join for a certain period of time?

TW - Duration plus six months.

JS - Duration.

TW - Plus six months.

JS - As the war progressed, how did you receive the news about the war? How did you know what was going on?

TW - Newspapers, mostly.

JS - Radio, maybe?

TW - Well, if you happened to be where there was one. I don't remember any radios in our barracks.

JS - And if you went to movies they would have that section of news?

TW - Yes.

JS - Do you remember where you were when victory was declared in Europe?

TW - I was on base, but I don't remember when. When I was working at night, the news came that the war was over.

JS - What about when they dropped the bombs on Japan?

TW - Well, I was working.

JS - And then you knew that you would be getting out?

TW - Well, we were pretty sure of it.

JS - Did you, in fact, get out six weeks later?

TW - About the end of September, I got a letter from the superintendent of schools back home.

JS - Was the contact with the school where you had been teaching before?

TW - No. It was near where my mother lived, that particular school and the superintendent knew the family. So, I took the letter down to the commanding officer and he said we would start processing and I should write back that I would be there and approximately when. And I was out of there in two weeks.

JS - That was fast work.

TW - Yes. I got my discharge the 30th of September. They were getting ready to close the women's section on that post.

JS - Oh, really. So everyone was going to be disbursing, then?

TW - They were going to be going somewhere.

JS - Did you ever think of staying in the service?

TW - Not really.

JS - So when you went home, then you were still teaching math?

TW – I taught math in a small high school in a town about the size of Ingalls, maybe. There was a shortage of teachers, of course. I taught junior high math, algebra and geometry, eight grade sciences, and I think I taught general science that year. I wasn't qualified on the science part but I taught it anyway and there was a physics class that I taught.

JS - You were busy.

TW - Well, we had eight periods during the day -- forty-five minutes each and I don't think I had a vacant period.

JS - Doesn't sound like it. How many students would you have had in a class?

TW - It varied. The physics class didn't have so many, probably ten or twelve, but the eighth grade class had around twenty-five or thirty and it dwindled in other groups.

JS - When you went into the University of Philadelphia you said you really learned more about teaching methods that you did about math. So did you apply some of those teaching methods in your work?

TW - I certainly did.

JS - When you were at the University of Arkansas, did you not have classes in.....?

TW - I had classes in teaching methods and all of that.

JS - What you did as a member of the Women's Army Corp—You were able to transfer that to your life after the war.

TW - Yes.

JS - Do you remember when the young men started coming home after the war?

TW - Well, it was pretty soon. Howard got home about the fifteenth of October.

JS - And he had been your boyfriend before.

TW - At one time, and we had been corresponding.

JS - And he was the one who asked you.....?

TW - He's the one I married.

JS - And did you marry him soon?

TW - In May. The next May.

JS - Did you continue to teach?

TW - No. He was working in Kansas, so I came to Kansas.

JS - Where, in Kansas?

TW - It was Burdett.

JS - What was he doing?

TW - Farm work.

JS - And how did he get out to Kansas?

TW - That's a long story. He came out before the war with his uncle and he was going to meet his uncle in Rozel and go home, and a fellow came along and offered him a job for five or six weeks working on the farm. When that played out a fellow said he had some jobs for him in Ellinwood and he ended up farming there. Then he got a job in the oil field and he just stayed. He worked in the oil fields for a while and he went to work for Milton Bosse around the elevator there in Ellinwood. He was working there when the war broke out and he knew he was going to be drafted. He didn't want the Army so he enlisted in the Navy.

JS - So, where did he see action?

TW - Pacific. He enlisted in February, I think it was. He was on the same ship from basic until the war ended.

JS - Is that unusual?

TW - I don't know.

JS - What did he do on the ship?

TW - He was in the engine room. They called him an engineer.

JS - Did he talk much about the war and give you stories? Was it a transport ship?

TW - No. It was a destroyer.

JS - Oh, then he was in battle.

TW - Oh yes, so he didn't tell a lot of stories but I know he still had nightmares.

JS - Because of his experiences?

TW - Yeah.

JS - We got sort of afield there, but I have some questions. So, when you came back and were teaching, it was just as if you were stepping back into how life had been before?

TW - Yes.

JS - But, the experience undoubtedly influenced you or was an important period in your life. Could you talk a little bit about that? And why it was, specifically?

TW - Well, I learned a lot and I think that counts anytime.

JS - Were you able to see and do things that you would not have been able to do otherwise?

TW - Oh yes. I wouldn't have been able to see anything on the east coast. Teachers didn't make enough to go traveling anywhere.

JS - When you started teaching before the war, how much did you make? Do you remember?

TW - I think that was an eight month school and I made \$70 each month and at Norfolk I taught for \$60 a month for eight months.

JS - That wasn't a lot of money. Or did it seem like a lot of money to you?

TW - It wasn't a lot of money but when I was at Norfolk, I was close enough to home that I could see the family.

JS - Did you live at home or did you board?

TW - I lived at home and I rode the school bus.

JS - Oh, you did?

TW - Along with the kids. Those school buses had one long seat along each side and one narrow seat in the middle. I have seen as much as a hundred kids on that bus at one time plus the driver and one of the cooks and another teacher.

JS - That also rode to school?

TW - Yes, gas was still rationed.

JS - That made sense then. Did you know how to drive?

TW - No.

JS - When did you learn to drive?

TW - Well, I got my driver's license about six week before my youngest daughter was born.

JS - Was that difficult?

TW - No. I needed to drive and I tried driving out around the country. We were living out at Kalvesta and I tried driving out around there some, not very much. We moved out there in '48. Howard and another fellow went pheasant hunting the first day of pheasant season and after they left a fellow came to inspect the elevator. I took two of my kids in the car and drove it. I didn't do a very good job, but I got by without having a wreck and found Howard.

JS - Was he farther west hunting?

TW - A lot of it was northwest of where we lived. I saw George's car and I had no idea how to sound a horn and George happened to come to the car for something. So Howard went back to see that inspector.

JS - And he drove on the way back?

TW - Yes.

JS - What did you do? You knew how to get the car started.

TW - I knew how to get the car started all right and I knew how to get it into gear. Of course, it was a stick shift. And the roads were pretty level.

JS - That was a pretty gutsy thing to do. How old were the children?

TW - There was a baby and Howard Jr. hadn't been born yet.

JS - After that is when you got the license?

TW - Several years after that.

JS - How did you learn to drive? Just take the car out or did someone teach you?

TW - I just started driving, I think.

JS - So you were living in Kalvesta at the time and this would have been after the war. '48 you said. So what was living in Kalvesta like?

TW - I loved that little community.

JS - It was very small wasn't it?

TW - Small, yes, but it was a close knit community.

JS - How long did you live there?

TW - About ten years.

JS - And then you moved to Cimarron?

TW - He moved from Bosse elevator to Cimarron Equity Co-op.

JS - Is there anything from your experience either in the Women's Army Corp or teaching that you think is important and valuable that you would like to tell a story or give an observation?

TW - Not that I can think of.

JS - Was it unusual for women to join the Women's Army Corp?

TW - Well it was just getting started.

JS - But in the United States it was not common for women to join?

TW - I don't think so.

JS - Did it, eventually, just disappear after the war?

TW - Oh no. I guess it did in a way, because women were accepted into the - regular Army.

JS - Were there ever any reunions that you went to?

TW - Well, I haven't been to any. There was one three or four years ago in Louisiana and I didn't try to go.

JS - Were you given the same benefits of being a veteran as the men?

TW - Yes.

JS - So when you got out, if you had not had a college education, could you have used the GI Bill?

TW - I think I could.

JS - And you are considered a veteran, now, for health and things like that?

TW - Yes.

JS - Looking back now over the years that have intervened, do you think you were maybe one of those women who broke ground by doing something unusual?

TW - I hadn't thought of it like that but maybe I was.

JS - Certainly the woman's effort in the war was important because it freed up the men for combat. Did you ever have the desire to travel to Europe and think maybe I plotted where some of the bombs dropped?

TW - Maybe not in that way, but I would like to have been overseas.

JS - When you were in the Corp?

TW - Yes.

JS - Did some women get sent overseas?

TW - Oh yes. Most of them did.

JS - What did they do over there, drive trucks and so on?

TW - Well, some of them did but they didn't go in the battle line. They were backup and did paper work and a lot of things like that.

JS - Could you have asked to do that?

TW - They sent a questionnaire around to the supervisors asking them to list the last they would want to give up and I headed the list so there was no chance.

JS - You were too good at doing what you did.

TW - I don't know about that.

JS - But don't you think your math background helped?

TW - I think it helped.

JS - In a way that is a compliment, but it may have kept you from going overseas.

Interviewer: Joyce Sullentrop (JS)

Interviewee: Travis Woody (IN)

Tape 1 of 1

END
