

NARRATOR: Keeney, Jennette
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: August 13, 2004
LOCATION: Boise, Idaho
PROJECT: Women in World War II/Veteran's History Project

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TAPE ONE

00:00	1	Introduction.
00:30	1	Keeney started the interview by explaining that she taught school for one year before joining the WACs because at that time you had to be 21 before you could enter without the signed consent of your parents, and she wanted to wait until she could join on her own. She also shared what happened to her ex-fiancé, Phil Freemyer, after they ended their engagement. He was a P-51 fighter pilot, and in the summer of 1948, his plane crashed while he was flying on a mission. Keeney found out about his death after she returned home. She is not sure what caused the crash.
5:30	3	Keeney talked about her husband, Milford Keeney. She met him after she graduated from college. She was hired for a teaching job in Portland, Oregon, when a man came to her school in Lincoln, Nebraska, to recruit teachers. A fellow teacher from her school invited Keeney to go to a movie with her and her cousin, Milford, from Buhl, Idaho. He was in Portland visiting doctors at the VA hospital about his knee that was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. He had his leg taken off above the knee on November 7, 1951, and had to walk with an artificial leg after that. Keeney and Milford got engaged just before the amputation surgery and married in 1952.
10:00	5	Keeney described her experiences at the Japanese war crimes trials. She attended one half day session of the trial of Hideki Tojo. She explained that she sat in the balcony above the proceedings and wore headphones so that she could hear the English translation of the Japanese that was being spoken in the trial. She believed the trial was held at the National Diet Building in Tokyo. Keeney talked about her impressions of the culture in Japan. She described her shock at first arriving. On the bus ride into Tokyo she realized that the bus driver was not just driving in the left lane to pass the traffic, but that the Japanese drove on the left hand side of the road. She recalled the strangeness of seeing all the Japanese people outside of the bus window when she was used to seeing Americans. She did not remember offending cultural expectations in Japan but she was

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15:45	8	<p>ashamed of the negative American attitudes towards the Japanese. She felt like she and the other Americans looked down on them for the terrible things reported about the Japanese during the War. At the time she also looked down on them. She explained that there was a lack of food and clothing in Japan, and often when she left her building, she encountered Japanese people looking for cigarette butts because they could not afford to buy their own cigarettes.</p>
20:45	10	<p>Keeney talked about the destruction caused by Allied bombing that she saw everywhere she went in Tokyo. Buildings with historical significance were left untouched but the decimation was all around. She felt like the Japanese treated her well as a woman in uniform. The children were curious about the Americans and often stood outside the school watching them. Keeney also spoke about the plays she participated in at the Ernie Pyle Theater. Americans put plays on for the Allied troops and their families in Japan. There were no Japanese involved in these productions. While in Tokyo the military did not allow the soldiers to go to Japanese restaurants or buy food at the sidewalk stands. They feared the food might be contaminated. If the Allied personnel wanted to go out to eat, they had could go to the PX. The military provided food for them in the dining room in their building the rest of the time.</p> <p>Keeney explained that on a flight to China the pilot of her plane dipped low above either Hiroshima or Nagasaki so they could see the city. She said there were only pieces of buildings remaining and not much more. That was the closest she ever got to those cities. Keeney and the interviewer began to look at the third scrapbook of Jennette's time in Japan. They described several pictures including one of the enlisted men's club, one of the Americans marching on the Imperial grounds, and one of the Dai Ichi Building that housed General MacArthur's headquarters.</p>
25:00	12	<p>Keeney described in more detail her daily work at the Dai Ichi Building. She said it was general office work that included a lot of typing. Before going to the school she received radiograms, and when she returned there she had to track all the correspondence that came through the headquarters. For lunch each day, she and her friend Garnet Hines walked the five or six blocks to their residence in the Mitsubishi building. Keeney explained how the Japanese celebrated New Year's Day. Keeney and the interviewer described several more of the pictures and the stories around them. She often went out with other American soldiers driving in a jeep around Tokyo. When on these trips, the Japanese children would come to see the Americans. [At 30:35 side one ends and side two begins.]</p>

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30:45	15	Keeney explained that the rebuilding of Tokyo was slow and the Japanese methods were somewhat primitive. She also talked about some of the Australian soldiers that she spent time with. She jokingly said they talked funny but seemed very nice. A picture of some generals watching a parade prompted the interviewer to ask if Keeney ever encountered MacArthur. Keeney did not have an opportunity to interact with him but she sometimes went with the groups that would wait to watch him coming to or leaving from work. Some of the pictures showed the locals farming in the country and others were of a trip she took to an island off the coast of Tokyo.
35:30	17	Keeney and the interviewer continued looking through the scrapbook observing more pictures of local life and a trip to the place Commodore Matthew Perry came to Japan. Keeney explained that there were railroad cars designated "Allied Only" that separated the Allied citizens from the Japanese people. She also talked about a trip she took into the mountains just outside of Tokyo. The beauty of the woods there struck her. Keeney explained that she decided to return to the United States in June of 1948 because she wanted to go back to college. She had been in Japan for a year and a half and her friend, Garnet, was returning. Keeney thought it would be less fun in Japan without Garnet because they did everything together. She had never considered the military as a career option, and she decided to decline the offer of joining the reserves when asked.
40:45	19	Keeney continued by talking about her trip to Shanghai, China in 1948 at the end of her stay in Japan. It was just before China was closed to outside travel, and the security was tight. She remembered feeling somewhat scared about being in Shanghai and apprehensive about getting stuck there. There were millions of people there, few of which were Americans. She shopped while there, buying items like Chinese silk. She also went to a factory to buy a chest made of teak wood to be shipped home to Haigler, Nebraska. It did not arrive until months after she returned. The interviewer read a commendation letter Keeney received from Brigadier General W.A. Beiderlinden. He also read a newsletter Keeney received in Los Alamos, New Mexico, dated August 31, 1945, that described the meaning of the shoulder patch issued to all the Army personnel assigned to work with the atomic weapons. The newsletter goes on to list the news of the Los Alamos base.
46:15	22	Keeney explained what it looked like to go to the movies at Los Alamos. The line for the movies was usually at least a block long and they sat on wooden benches. They paid ten cents and got to see the movies before they were released to the public. The conversation returned to her life after the military. She finished

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teaching in May of 1952. Her mother and sister came from Nebraska to visit during her last two weeks in Portland. After this the three of them joined Milford and his mother and sister and they drove two cars back to Haigler, Nebraska. There Keeney married Milford in June of 1952. Shortly after the wedding, they moved to Pocatello, Idaho, so he could return to college. He had taken a break from school after his third year because his leg was giving him so much trouble. They lived on campus for two years as he finished school. Before having his leg amputated, he had studied teaching, but after it was removed, he had to change his major to a profession that did not require him to stand so much. After taking some tests, the VA told him that he could either go into dentistry or accounting. He chose accounting. He followed the instruction of the VA because he was getting money from them for school. Keeney explained that when she came home in 1948 she took advantage of the GI Bill to complete her schooling. She graduated in 1950 before going to Portland to teach.

49:30	23	Keeney described the years they spent in Pocatello. They lived in one of the sixteen houses the school had on campus for seniors. She was a member of the student wives group. A new elementary school opened while she was there, and she had a job teaching the first grade. She and Milford started having children in 1957. Their son, Gary, was born in 1957. He was followed in 1959 by their daughter, Kyla, and in 1963 by their other son, Jack. Keeney mentioned that her younger sister died in 1992 because of a brain tumor. Her older sister still lives in Nebraska. After her husband received his degree, they moved to Twin Falls, Idaho, where he worked as a CPA. Then in 1968, he got a job working for the state, so they moved to Boise. Six years later, in 1974, Milford died in the hospital after having a heart attack while at work. The children had a hard time dealing with the shock of losing their father.
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55:15	23	Keeney has lived in the same house since they moved to Boise in 1968. They moved into the Randolph Robertson subdivision located just off of Cole Road. She explained that a lot has changed in Boise since she came. She especially dislikes the increase in traffic. She also mentioned the high prices, pointing out the increase in milk and gas costs. They bought their house for \$22,500, and she has been told that she could sell it for \$135,000. After her husband passed away, Keeney was able to live off the money from the insurance plans Milford had invested in. While the children were in high school and college, they got some money from Social Security benefits.
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1:00:00	29	After Milford died Keeney was able to add some extras to the house that he would not allow before. She installed an air conditioner and an automatic garage door opener. While at first worries over managing the family without him kept her up at night, she decided that she would just try to be the best mother she could be to the kids. Keeney's daughter taught piano lessons for four years while she was in high school and her first year of college at BSU. When she was leaving to go to school in Portland, Keeney decided that she would try to take over for Kyla. She enjoyed it so much that she has been teaching piano for twenty-eight years. Keeney ended the interview by describing the close relationships she has with her neighbors. They have always been there to help her when she needed them. [At 1:01:00 the analog cassette copy moves to tape two.]
1:41:30	31	END OF THE RECORDING

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Beiderlinden, Brigadier General W.A.
Buhl, Idaho
Dai Ichi Building (Tokyo, Japan)
Ernie Pyle Theater, The (Tokyo, Japan)
Freemyer, Phil
Haigler, Nebraska
Hines, Garnet
Hiroshima, Japan
Keeney, Milford
Lincoln, Nebraska
Los Alamos, New Mexico
MacArthur, General Douglas
Nagasaki, Japan
Perry, Commodore Matthew
Pocatello, Idaho
Portland, Oregon
Shanghai, China
Tojo, Hideki
Tokyo, Japan
Twin Falls, Idaho