

NARRATOR: Keister, Glenadene
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: September 17, 2003
LOCATION: Sunny Slope, Idaho (near Marsing, Idaho)
PROJECT: Women in WWII/Veterans History Project

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TAPE ONE

00:00	1	Introduction
00:45	1	Keister was teaching school in Colorado on December 7, 1941. Keister rode the school bus to school the next day, just like the children, and she remembered the school bus driver stating that he was enlisting the next day. She talked about what classes she taught at the small, two-room schoolhouse and how she became a teacher. She talked about the other young men in the small community of Meeker that joined the military and about the feeling after the initial shock of Pearl Harbor had faded. Keister talked about her education, including the places she taught in Colorado before she enlisted in the WAVES (Women Appointed for Voluntary Emergency Services).
05:45	3	She talked about how she and other Coloradoans knew little about world events, particularly in the Pacific Theater. Keister reiterated the fact that she taught in three different schools in Colorado between Pearl Harbor and the WAVES. She actually taught in only two school districts; she moved up from teaching elementary school to high school. Keister then talked about how and why she began to consider joining the auxiliary military. Since she had no attachments during the 1943/1944 school year, she went down to join the WAVES in the spring of 1944. She figured that she could start after the school year, but once she passed the tests, they required her to go to Denver before the end of the school year.
10:15	4	From Denver she and other WAVES went to Cheyenne, Wyoming to catch a train that contained hundreds if not thousands of WAVES. The train weaved throughout the country and ended up in New York. She offered an overview of the train trip, including arriving in New Jersey too late to travel to the training center, so they spent the night on the train. They took a ferry from New Jersey to New York in the morning; she heard tugboats and other boats. It was misty, but the mist cleared in time for them to see the Statue of Liberty. That scene still caused her great emotion to think about today. Looking back on her training experience in New York, she said, "It was very interesting and very intense." She lived with 12 other WAVES in a

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		small apartment (with only one bathroom), so she has little sympathy for Americans who complained about crowded conditions.
16:15	5	While in New York, all of the WAVES in the same training group (around 3,000) were given their uniforms early so they could attend Easter religious ceremonies at the various major churches in New York. She remembered that day vividly. She then discussed how other WAVES dealt with losing male family members in the War and how some WAVES might look to get pregnant to get out of the WAVES. Keister talked about how some WAVES seemed to complain about everything, particularly during the training at Hunter College in New York.
21:00	8	Her trip to New York was her first extended train ride, although she had ridden on them before. She said that the train ride from Denver to Cheyenne was accomplished in reverse, meaning they backed the train from Denver north to Cheyenne. Keister could not recall any specifics about the trip, except they stopped a lot to pick up other WAVES. She did note that the train traffic was intense, because most everything and everyone traveled that way during WWII. Keister bemoaned how train travel has been almost eliminated. She talked about the conditions within the trains, including bathrooms, sleeping areas, and dining cars. According to Keister, train travel was an intimate experience. Keister said that the African American dining staff always kept the dining cars clean; she equated it to dining at a fine restaurant today.
27:45	9	Keister continued to describe the train trip, focusing on how the seating area transformed into the sleeping area at night. She explained how being in the upper sleeping berth meant having no windows to look through and how there were no doors to lock the sleepers in (or lock others out). [At 29:55 tape one side one ends, and side two begins.] Keister did recall that other trains had rooms that converted into a bedroom with a door, so a person could close him or herself into the sleeping room.
31:45	12	The train trip across the country was the first time that Keister had met numerous African Americans, although she went to high school with two African Americans. She found the African American porters to be polite and well trained. She then told a story about taking her children (well after WWII) on train trips and their reaction to seeing African Americans. The interviewer asked Keister to relate her impression of New York City. Keister talked about the subway, the different languages, and the large number of people. She told a story about going downtown in New York and seeing the ornate, beautifully crafted window displays at Macy's. The prices at Macy's

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		staggered her; she told a story about how much the school paid her at her first teaching job (\$75 a month).
38:00	15	Teaching school, according to Keister, prepared her positively to joining the WAVES. She continued to say that learning to follow rules put forth by school administrators helped her with the military. She never regretted joining the WAVES and never felt ill prepared for the experience. She estimated that she spent three months in New York training. She detailed the aspects of her training and of a “typical” day during this initial training, including living in the small apartment, testing, exercising, eating, watching movies or other entertainment, and wearing the uniform, shoes, and raincoat. She said it was rigorous but much better than the men endured in the military.
46:30	16	She did not take any specific classes during “boot school” (training). That would come later. She said she did not want to bend any rules, because she did not want to work on “KP” or to toil at some other unpleasant chore. She talked about the restriction against smoking during the day; some apartments would hold the “smokers.” She mentioned that some women would cry to deal with the stress; she offered her opinions as to why women who did not adjust to the WAVES joined in the first place. There was no graduation ceremony, but she did mention a drill meeting within a stadium, where they marched and drilled in large groups (at least 144 women). She said that the humidity on that particular day really affected her; Keister felt as if she would pass out. She moved from the group and almost made it to a spot to rest before she passed out. She woke up with medics around her, and they would not let her continue. She said that some of the other women felt scared, because if “Glen” passed out, then they “would just die.”
55:30	21	After finishing “boot school,” she received her orders. She scored well in math exams, because she had taught math. So, she was ordered to Pensacola, Florida, to gunnery school; she offered an overview of her job at gunnery school, including training on the weapons and learning how to use math to aim at targets. From Florida she was transferred to Brunswick, Maine. She explained how she and one other tall woman from Maine gained transfers to Maine.
59:30	22	Keister and this other WAVE took the train to Maine, stopping at this woman’s house to pick up her car. She and Keister arrived at the camp in Brunswick driving that car, which was quite a feat, because of gas rationing. [At 60:10 tape one side two ends, and tape two side one begins.] Her future husband lived on that base, and he told her (later) how the other Naval sailors and officers

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		reacted to these two women's arrival. Keister offered an overview of working at this base, which involved training Lend Lease pilots from Great Britain. These men had never been trained by women, but she found them to be polite and eager to learn. She talked about teaching the pilots how to recognize the ships and planes from a distance to determine if they were friend or foe, as well as where to aim to hit them (if they were a foe). She talked about how it was important, particularly in the Pacific Theater, to be able to discern a Japanese ship from an Allied ship. Looking back at it, she relished this opportunity, because she could get nothing like it, at the time, anywhere else.
66:00	25	END OF TAPE TWO END OF INTERVIEW

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Brunswick, Maine
Hunter College (New York)
Meeker, Colorado
New York, New York
Pensacola, Florida