

## War Era Story Project 2012

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In 1945, I was living in Springfield, Ohio, with my mother and brother, working for the War Department at Patterson Field. In March of that year, I transferred to Washington, DC, in order to get a raise in grade and pay, and arrived there April 1st. The first night I slept at Arlington Farms in Arlington, VA. I was taken the next day to DC, to the War Department, for my first job.

I don't remember what department the first was in, except that I was a typist. What I do remember was typing seven copies of everything on thick paper that was almost like construction paper. Putting the first four papers and their carbons in the manual typewriter, we typed first them, then the last three sheets. There were no erasers due to the rubber shortage, so to correct errors we used sharp single-edged razor blades to scrape any errors off the paper. We did this extremely carefully, you may be sure!

I was called to my superintendent's office one day and told I'd been transferred to the Suggestions Office. This was where citizens sent their ideas for ending the war. When I asked if I had a choice, I was told, "No, you've been volunteered." I believe someone noticed I was a good speller with usually good grammar. At any rate, there I was. And the Suggestions Office was a shambles indeed. My main job, next to typing, was to get the files put in correct alphabetical order. The misspellings and miss-filings were rampant. For example, to file a paper in for Fort Sheridan, IL, you tried S for Sheridan, F for Fort, C for Camp, or even A for Army! Three-drawer file cabinets stood around the room, each in the same condition.

Later I was transferred to the Munitions Building in the city. My work there was to help keep officer's records straight by adding any new information to their papers. I made friends with a black girl there, but going home, we couldn't ride the city bus together, unless she sat in the back, and I in the front. Segregation was rampant in Washington DC, supposedly the city of freedom! So the two of us walked and talked until we came to place for her to leave to go her own way.

I was there in Washington when President Franklin Roosevelt died and Vice President Harry Truman was sworn in. Mr. Truman had the A-bombs dropped on both Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and after a few days that part of the war ended! Then one day I was coming home in a streetcar, after picking up my clean ironed clothes from the "colored district" where they'd been washed for me, when it seemed every bell and whistle in the whole city was being rung or blown. The Germans had surrendered!!! THE WAR WAS OVER!!! The world was free, after four years of hell.

That night, along with about half the city, I went downtown to see and share in the excitement, and managed to break a lens of my glasses even though they were in a metal case in my purse. Servicemen would line up, grab the nearest female under 60 (probably even some well over 60!) kissed her and passed her on. Whooeey, what a night that was! One shapely girl stood on a car roof and did a strip tease

to the sound of whistles, cat calls and yells. She was fun to watch because she was so good at it. Professionally good!

The Fourth of July fireworks were spectacular. I've never seen anything even close since then. The display went on for so long and was so loud that a Marine on R & R (Rest and Recuperation) fell to the ground into a ditch, screaming and cowering, thinking he was being bombed. His buddies picked him up, poured him into a cab and took him to the Walter Reed Army Hospital. However, he wasn't and couldn't be admitted, as Walter Reed was an Army Hospital, and no one from the other services were allowed in. What a row followed! Finally, Congress got into it, and policies were changed. Military hospitals now must accept people from any branch of the Services.

I left that December, as Mother insisted, because otherwise I wouldn't have been home for three Christmases. Since it was too late to apply for Christmas leave, I had to resign in order to go home. My boss said he'd be more than glad to rehire me. I arrived in Dayton December 18, 1945. Mother would not let me go back to DC, because since I wasn't 21 yet, I was still a minor and she had control of me.

While I was doing my bit in the war in my own way, Sgt. Paul Plevelich, whom I later married, was stationed on Guam. One thing he told me about was how he and other soldiers had to go in to the caves on the islands where the Japanese soldiers had been, to see if any were still in them. He and a few others would cautiously enter the caves, slithering in sideways so as to not make too big a target. When inside, they walked down the corridors, turning the corners to another walkway, guns at the ready, alert for anything and everything. Once, when they turned a corner, there lay a dead Japanese soldier on his back, against the wall, a most calm look on his face, his hands clasped on his chest. Paul never forgot that sight.