

Epilogue

With the ending of the war, some twelve million members of the United States armed forces eagerly awaited discharge. That number included about 275,000 women in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Men and women had entered the military for “the duration of the emergency and six months.” The Naval Command decided to use the Manhattan Towers, Dot’s barracks, as a Separation Center (a site devoted to the processing of discharge papers). In the summer of 1945 when the Japanese surrendered, approximately 86,000 WAVES served in the Navy. The slogan “Free a Man to Fight” had originally justified their enlistment. Based on the numbers of WAVES who served, they certainly did that. The Navy calculated that the women’s enlistment had “freed up” enough men to man a task force that, in theory, included a battleship, two large aircraft carriers, two heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, and fifteen destroyers. But it did not take long for the Command to understand that with the peace, the Navy still needed the WAVES. It required personnel to process the paperwork necessary to discharge millions of men.¹

Dot and her sister WAVES who had billeted at the Manhattan Towers moved to what she recalls as the Whitehall Hotel at 100 Broadway. In respect to her duty assignment, Dot remained at the Radio Station on Church Street for another ten months. In June 1946, new orders came in. While Dot stayed in the Third Naval District, she now reported to Staff Headquarters (HQ) in New York City on June 21st. With the passage of time, she cannot recall her exact duties at HQ, but it was probably some type of office work. At one point, Dot left the Whitehall Hotel and billeted at what she remembers as “the Green Barracks” on Myrtle Street in Brooklyn. The buildings had once been used by the Army as sleeping quarters for soldiers. Dot used the trolley car to get to work. She remained at Staff HQ for only four months. On November 1, 1946, Dot reported to the Radio Station in the Ninth Naval District in Great Lakes, Illinois. When Naval Station Great Lakes opened in 1911, some thought it strange to train recruits at an installation located more than one thousand miles from an ocean. During World War II the Navy trained in excess of one million sailors at Great Lakes.²

Within the Radio Station, Dot worked in the Registered Publications Issuing Office (RPIO). The office was part of Naval Communications. RPIO dealt with confidential publications. Dot describes herself as “working behind bars” due to the classified material she handled. They were, she adds, “real bars. We were locked in.” One of her main jobs was to



update what she identifies as a “Log Book” in the Communications room for naval ships. If a certain vessel replaced one or more of its parts, the ship sent such notification to the Radio Station in New York City. Dot saw to it that the new parts were entered into the Log Book for that ship. The barracks for the WAVES were on the grounds of the Navy hospital.³ As 1946 drew to a close, Dot expected to remain in the Navy. While at Great Lakes, she retained the T1 rank (Telegrapher First Class) she had received in New York. Her dream was to one day become a Chief Petty Officer. But a certain Marine sergeant entered Dot’s life around Easter time in 1947. He dramatically changed her plans.

The year 1947 had not begun on a good note for Dot. James Bryd died in February. Looking back on the spring that followed, one can see that Dot needed some smiles and laughter to enter her life. They came in the form of Master Sergeant Theodore Bernard Roosvall, Jr., or as he later liked to call himself, "Just Plain Ted." Born and raised in Chicago, he entered the Marine Corps in January 1939. One of his early duty stations was at a naval ammunition depot in Pearl Harbor, on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. Ted arrived there in April 1941, assigned to the Quartermaster Department. He was still there on one of the most famous days in United States history--December 7, 1941. Ted survived the Japanese attack on American installations in and around Pearl Harbor. After thirty months in Hawaii, the Marine Corps sent him to some stateside duty stations where he continued working in the Quartermaster Department. His time at the Naval Station Great Lakes coincided with Dot's assignment there. Years later, Ted described the moment when he first saw her. "One evening, while cruising the streets near the station, I spotted this tall, slender woman wearing the uniform of a Navy WAVE. Thinking she might be interested in a few good men, or one anyway, I investigated and her identity turned out to be Dorothy Farmer... The die was cast!"



Their first meeting, as Dot explains, occurred at her RPIO duty station. Ted came in one day, obviously looking for the WAVE who had caught his eye. "We first talked with each other between the iron bars," as Dot describes their initial encounter. Ted visited her after that in a room in the WAVES' barracks, one devoted to "socializing," to use her phrase. Dot smiles when she recalls walking from her room to the front of the barracks to see Ted. On her off-duty hours, she wore Huaraches, a sandal made of straw and leather. They squeaked when she walked on the floors of the barracks. Ted and Dot dated for a few months after which time Ted asked her to



marry him. Before he could give her an engagement ring, however, he received orders to report to the Portsmouth Naval Base in New Hampshire. One day after Ted had left Great Lakes, the U.S. postal service delivered a package to Dot. It was from Ted. With her co-workers looking on, she opened it. Inside was a diamond ring set in a platinum band. The stones had belonged to Ted's mother who had died the very week he had graduated from high school. Dot and Ted married on January 6, 1948. The ceremony took place at Albany Lutheran Church in Chicago where his father lived. It was a small wedding. No one in Dot's family was able to make the trip to Chicago. Ted's father along with Ted's sister and her husband represented the Roosvalls. Four of Dot's WAVE friends came from Great Lakes. Ted wore his dress blues. One of the WAVES took pictures and gave Dot and Ted copies as a gift. While Dot could have worn one of her uniforms, she chose

instead to wear a dress, a decision which at the time appealed to her since she always seemed to be in uniform. Years later, she wishes she would have worn her navy blue WAVE outfit. Few married couples have a wedding picture with both husband and wife in uniform.

With her marriage to Ted, Dot decided to leave the Navy so she could be with him at his duty station in Portsmouth. The paperwork for her request to be discharged began at the Separation Center at Great Lakes in mid-January, just a week after the wedding. Dot's active service in the Navy lasted for three years, three months, and twenty-four days. During that time, she rose through the ratings--Apprentice Seaman, Seaman Second Class, Seaman First Class, Telegrapher Third Class, Telegrapher Second Class, and Telegrapher First Class. Her official "date of separation" became January 15, 1948. It was not, however, a complete separation. Dot retained an "inactive duty status" for thirteen months, until early February 1949. She entered the Navy Reserves two months later, retaining her inactive status until she was formally discharged on January 11, 1954. Dot's total time as a WAVE, counting both active and inactive, was four years and nine months.⁴



Coincidentally, Dot's January 1948 separation occurred at a historic time for the history of women in the Navy. From a wartime high of about 100,000, by July 1948 only 2,000 women were in the WAVES. In June 1948, Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act that brought women into the various branches on a permanent basis as regular members. In the first two years after its passage, the law restricted the number of enlisted women in the Regular Navy to six thousand. If Ted had not entered her life, Dot would probably have been one of them.⁵

Beginning in January 1948 with her marriage to Ted, Dot moved with him to one duty station after another. After Portsmouth, the Marine Corps sent him to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. In the early 1950s, Ted received orders to go to Korea where he remained within the Quartermaster Corps. He was gone for about a year, during which time Dot lived with her sisters in Detroit. Ted's last duty station was at Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California. When he retired in 1956, they decided to remain in the area, living in the cities of first Vista and then San Marcos. The couple traveled at times, although in that respect, Dot remained the more adventuresome of the two. After seventeen years of moving from one duty station to another, Ted enjoyed staying home. When friends journeyed to far off places, Ted asked them to bring him a local newspaper. Like Dot's father, Ted enjoyed reading such publications. Ted and Dot remained active in their community, with Ted especially becoming a fixture at veterans' events. People easily spotted him, wearing as he did the official blue jacket from the local chapter of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. Ted's death in April 2011 occurred sixty-four years after he had become captivated with "a tall, slender woman wearing the uniform of a Navy WAVE." Thinking back on her time in the service, Dot recently concluded, "My only regret is that I did not join sooner." One knows, too, that her only regret about her marriage to Ted is that it did not last longer.

She remains today, as she did during World War II, a role model for women in more than one way. As a young girl, Dot valued education at a time when the majority of her peers did not graduate from high school. Within her own immediate family, aside from Dot, only one of her siblings did so. Dot's interest in learning continued after she left school. With her first paychecks back in 1939, she bought books to further her education. Even though her eyes tire on

her today, reading remains one of her pleasures. Dot set another example with her resolve to explore a world outside of the safe and secure one she had grown up in. Her moves to first Detroit and then Evansville followed her high school graduation. Dot's bold decision to join the WAVES took her even further from her Kentucky roots. Her life with Ted made her somewhat of a wanderer, but a thoroughly adaptable one. Complaining is not Dot's style, adapting is. Her life these last three years without Ted is merely the latest example of her spirit. With each move--from the family farm to Ted's duty stations--she became an example of how women could venture far beyond a circumscribed life, adapting to new situations as they did so.

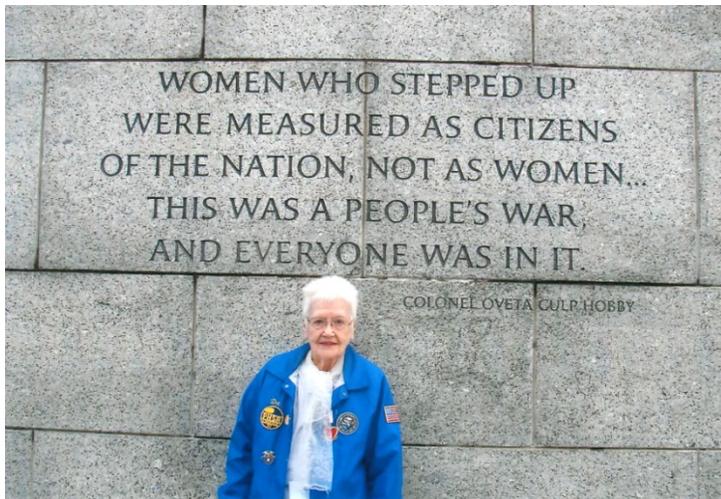
Dot's military service in World War II is perhaps the best example of that. Unlike men, women were not compelled to wear the uniform. To do so went against cultural norms and rumors that questioned their motives and morals. In spite of this, Dot enlisted in the WAVES. Her sense of patriotism, and probably, too, her innate sense of adventure, explain this decision. By entering the Navy, she became one of a relatively small number of American women who expanded opportunities for generations of women who came after them. The very year she left active duty, women were integrated into the United States Armed Forces. The military service status of American women would no longer be classified as "auxiliary," "emergency," or "reserve." Few can say that they helped to change history, but Dorothy Farmer Roosvall certainly did.



Dot's boot camp graduation picture on board the *USS Hunter*, October 1944
(Dot is on the left side of the top right window pane)



Dot today before a display on women who served in the military during WW II



Dot in October 2014 at the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

¹*Selective Service and Victory, The 4th Report of the Director of Selective Service* (Washington, D.C., 1948), p. 154 explains that the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard reached a “peak strength of 12, 314,000 on June 1, 1945, just after V-E day.” That figure included about 275,000 women but did not include MIAs, POWs, or “deceased.” The WW II phrase on the length of enlistment is taken from Maj. Gen. Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret.), *Women in the Military, An Unfinished Revolution* (Novato, CA, 1982), pp. 98, 101.

² Dot’s Honorable Discharge lists her duty stations and the dates she was at each one; for Naval Station Great Lakes, see www.bootcamp.navy.mil/history.asp (accessed November 16, 2014).

³ Dot saved an insert from one of her Book-of-the-Month Club volumes that gives her mailing address as “Waves Brks. 104H, U.S.N. Hosp., Great Lakes, Ill.”

⁴ Dot’s Honorable discharge papers and her January 15, 1948 Notice of Separation contain information on her separation date, her entrance into inactive duty status, and her 1954 discharge.

⁵ The number of women in the Navy in 1948 is taken from Joy Bright Hancock, *Lady in the Navy, a Personal Reminiscence* (Annapolis, 1972), p. 236.