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I was born in Colville, WA on September 19, 1922 to Elmer and Martha Gilbert, the third of seven children. The boys were the youngest so I became my Dad's "boy," helping him in the dairy and farming. I milked many a cow and learned to use a saw and hammer. I could saw a board and pound a nail better than most boys. All my schooling was in Colville, graduating in 1940. I was the first Honored Queen of Bethel 13 Jobs Daughters. My Dad was a veteran of World War I and commander of Frank Starr Post of the American Legion in Colville. He and I were very close and he was so proud of me "going off to war."

Barbara Garringer Olsen and I were friends in school and often spoke of joining the WAVES. The minimum age for enlisting was twenty. After our birthdays we decided to wait until after the Christmas holidays to enlist. On January 15, 1943 we did it! My Dad took me to Spokane for the swearing-in ceremony. On the enlistment exam I scored high on tools and their use. The officer wanted me to go to airplane mechanic school. I resisted and finally convinced him when I said I wouldn't go up in a plane I had serviced, let alone expect anyone else to. He finally agreed that yeoman would be best for me.

I was called to active duty on February 25, 1943, reporting to USNTS, Cedar Falls, Iowa (about as far from water as a person could be). We were billeted in dormitories at Iowa State Teachers College. Our days were spent in calisthenics and marching, marching, marching! I lost inches on this regime but very few pounds. I was a member of a "crack marching" platoon which was called upon to march in parades all around Cedar Falls. Every Friday we had inspection by the captain. If he got any dirt on his white gloves we were not given a pass for liberty. His pet thing was to check our suitcases to see if we had stuffed things in there to get them out of sight. We decided to "teach him a lesson." One Friday we lined our suitcases with Kotex pads. He never said a word when he saw them, but he never again inspected the luggage -- at least not in our billet. Our class was the last boot camp held there as it was converted to a yeoman school.

After a month of yeoman school to learn the Navy way, I was sent to Washington, D.C. where I was assigned to BuPers (Bureau of Naval Personnel).

Several months later I looked up from my work and there was Barbara being seated just two desks away! That wouldn't happen again in a million years. After a year, Barbara requested a transfer to the West Coast. We had many good time while she was in Washington.

We were housed in barracks built especially for service women. Soon there were not enough barracks so ones who had been there longer were able to move out on quarters and subsistence. A WAVE from Massachusetts and one from Ohio were my roommates for the entire time I was stationed there.

The WAVE officer who swore me in in Spokane became the Personnel Officer at BuPers. Because of this, I was privy to some experiences not available to others. One such experience was being one of seven enlisted WAVES on official duty for the funeral of Secretary of the Navy Knox. We received the flowers and catalogued them. We each took a red rose from the wreath sent by President and Mrs. Roosevelt. I pressed mine and still have it packed in cotton in perfect condition.

My first assignment was not very inspiring. However, then the Navy lost three ships during a typhoon in Leyte Gulf, I was transferred to the Senior Surviving Officer Unit. After losing a ship the senior officer would come into the Bureau to write letters to families of injured or lost ones. Because the loss of a ship was not made public until all this was done, I had to be cleared to handle Top Secret material. To be handed a wristwatch or billfold and told to see that it was sent to a wife or parents was very stressful. One day the captain of an aircraft carrier forgot to take plans with him when he went to the Bureau of Ships so he called me to bring them to him. I was not cleared to take secret material out of the Bureau so had to go to Admiral Denfeld (head of the Bureau) for permission, which he gave but assigned two marines to escort me. At the Bureau of Ships the room was filled with "gold braid." The captain proceeded to introduce me to each of them. There I was a lowly yeoman being introduced to a room full of admirals.

The first Christmas away from home I was quite homesick. One of the women from Colville had a brother in the Navy stationed in D.C. I received a written invitation to join his family for Christmas dinner. I was quite nervous, not having met them before. However, as I entered the house he grabbed me and kissed me under the mistletoe hanging there. Needless to say, that broke the ice.

My roommate from Ohio had a good friend who was a gunnery officer on an Italian luxury liner that had been converted to a troop ship. He invited us to spend a weekend aboard the ship which was berthed in New Jersey. We each

had a stateroom and ate in the officers mess. Except for the gunnery detachment, the crew was Italian and seemed to get a big bang out of us being there.

In the meantime, I met a sailor from North Carolina who was in for advanced firecontrolman training. We certainly didn't hit it off in the beginning. He called me Dimples, a name I detested so I wanted nothing to do with him. Several months went by before I saw him again. One evening I was on my way to dinner and bowling when I saw him. He wanted to know where I was going, so I told him. He wanted to know if he could come along. I retorted that I didn't care what he did. He turned out to be a very polite southern gentleman and we were married on December 8, 1945. At that time I was secretary to a commander who was Admiral Denfeld's assistant. He advised me to request a discharge as personnel in the Bureau were going to be frozen to their jobs for six months to take care of all the records that would be coming in. I did as he recommended and he approved my discharge. On December 21, 1945, I was discharged, having served 2 years, 11 months and 7 days. Our marriage lasted over 41 years until his death on March 14, 1987.

Several years ago Barbara and I started trying to organize a unit of WAVES National. There had to be ten members to get a charter. We finally did it on April 25, 1995. Unit 140 has grown to 35 members and was awarded a certificate and \$100 for having the biggest increase in membership, per capita, in the whole USA. What a feather in our cap!

I WOULDN'T TAKE A MILLION DOLLARS FOR THOSE 2 YEARS 11 MONTHS AND 7 DAYS!