

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
LORRAINE “CONNIE” M. ALLORD  
Staff Sergeant, United States Marine Corps, WWII  
1995

OH  
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**Allord, Lorraine M.**, (1927- ). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 90 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Recordings: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 90 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

### **Abstract**

Allord, a Tomahawk, Wis. native, discusses her military career as an air traffic controller in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve during World War II and her later veteran activities in Wisconsin. Allord describes her induction in Milwaukee and train ride to basic training at Camp Lejune (North Carolina). Stationed at Cherry Point, Allord describes her experiences working both in the tower and in clearance. Included are many stories about wartime stateside duty and information about military aviation, officer/enlisted and men/women relations, attitudes of drill instructors, living conditions, communication difficulties, film celebrities encountered, and wartime rationing. Also addressed is social life at the base, including USO events and informal activities. VE-Day and Allord's participation in a VJ-Day celebration around the Capitol Square in Madison (Wis.) are discussed. She provides a sketch of her transition to civilian life where she used the GI Bill to attend Madison Area Technical College. Also referenced are difficulties veterans faced finding employment. She refers to her membership in a variety of veteran's organizations including the American Legion, VFW-Auxiliary, Marine Corps League, United Women's Veterans, and Women Marines Association. Allord discusses attitudes towards women veterans by members of these groups and the general public.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Allord (b. January 27, 1920) entered the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in November 1943 and achieved the rank of Staff Sargent. She was honorably discharged November 1, 1945 and lived in Madison (Wis.) for several years before permanently settling in Middleton (Wis.).

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995.

Transcribed by Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs staff, 1997.

Transcription edited by David S. DeHorse and Abigail Miller, 2002.

## **Interview Transcript**

Mark: Today's date is January 5, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with Lorraine M. Allord, better known as Connie Allord, a veteran of the Women Marines in World War II. Good morning. How are you?

Allord: Just fine. Thank you.

Mark: I suppose the place to start would be at the beginning, so I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about where you were born and your upbringing and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Allord: OK. I was born in Tomahawk, WI, grew up there, graduated from high school, started working right after high school.

Mark: What did you do?

Allord: I was secretary to Superintendent of Schools. Then I started working for the Agricultural Administration and shortly after I was married to Lawrence Allord, and we then lived in Madison, and we were married just a month before Pearl Harbor, and of course our future looked pretty bleak right then, and he was a welder and started working up at Badger Ordnance, and worked there until it was nearly complete, and he talked about enlisting in the newly formed Seabees I started looking into the Marine Corps. It was my only choice.

Mark: Why was that?

Allord: I guess because of the prestige of the Marine Corps, plus I know he'd end up in the Pacific where the Marines were. I knew I wouldn't be going. Marine recruiters said they wanted to free up Marines to fight, which I wanted to do. And which we did.

Mark: Was this 1942 when you did this?

Allord: 1943. Women Marines were formed on February 13, 1943.

Mark: So you must have been one of the very first ones.

Allord: Not really. I didn't go in then. We enlisted together, he in the Seabees and me in the Marine Corps.

## **Interview Transcript (continued)**

Mark: What's interesting to me is why you decided to join at all. As a woman in World War II you weren't required to join the service at all. You could have stayed home. What prompted you to join the military?

Allord: What would I do at home? I wasn't interested in just hanging around biding my time. I wanted to get in and do something useful. And the military was intriguing to me. I wanted to be a part of it.

Mark: Did you have any military background in your family?

Allord: My father was in World War I in the Army. Well, I was an outdoors person, I grew up in the outdoors, hunting and fishing and it wasn't exactly foreign to me.

Mark: I'm familiar with that part of the state actually. My mother grew up in Oneida County. Monico. It's just a little crossroads.

Allord: Right.

Mark: So in 1943 you and your husband both joined the armed service at the very same time.

Allord: Right. He was called sooner than I was. They had a great need for Seabees and I was called in November and I was actually in boot camp over Christmas of '43.

Mark: So what you did then was you signed up and then waited for the services to call.

Allord: Yes. Of course, they didn't take a husband and wife into the same service.

Mark: I'm interested in the actual enlistment process. For guys it's get the haircut, get yelled at, all these kinds of things—

Allord: We had to have five letters of recommendation. We had strict physicals. And it was quite a process. They didn't just feel your pulse and say, "We'll take you". They were quite discriminating. In fact, on my last trip to Milwaukee when I had passed or taken all of my exams, I was waiting for my turn for my final interview and I really panicked when I heard over the divider, the Captain say to the girl before me, he said, "I'm sorry, but you just don't qualify for the Marine Corps. If you are still interested in the military, perhaps one of the other branches would take you." So with that, I walked in really kind of panicky. But the first thing Captain Rankin said was "Well, you've passed everything with flying colors, when would you like to be sworn in?" And I said, "Right now". So I was.

Mark: So this occurred in Madison or—

### **Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: No, in Milwaukee. On October 4, and then I had to go back. At that time, Larry had already been called and I was living with my parents in Tomahawk.

Mark: Where did you go to boot camp?

Allord: Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

Mark: How did you get there, on a train?

Allord: On a troop train, which I didn't know a soul. We left out of Chicago on the troop train.

Mark: Was this a troop train with just women in it?

Allord: As far as I know it was just women. Well of course other parts of the train may have had others, I have no idea.

Mark: Were you kept segregated from the other parts of the train or you just never—

Allord: Yes. We were segregated and we traveled all day and got into Washington and our dining car was taken off and promptly an engine broke down. So all-night we crawled to North Carolina without a dining car. We got to Rocky Mount, North Carolina and still had to be bused 150 miles to Camp Lejeune. Arrived there at 4:00 in the afternoon without having had breakfast or lunch.

Mark: What happened when you stepped off the train?

Allord: We were about ready to eat the cooks, but they had the dining hall set up for us and whatever manners [slight laugh] we might have learned about dining etiquette sort of went out the window.

Mark: A lot of famished people. Perhaps you could describe the mood on this train. Were people excited? Were people apprehensive?

Allord: Both, I think. But I don't recall anything unusual, we settled down and read, talked, whatever.

Mark: So when did the actual boot camp process begin? The next morning then, the evening?

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: No. Right then, after we ate. Then we were ushered into lines and were assigned to companies and platoons and assigned our bunks and bunkmates and what not and got part of our issue like bedding and foot lockers and what not. In the morning it was just right into our indoctrination into the military.

Mark: In the movies and the legends of the military, boot camp involves a lot of yelling and screaming and this kind of thing. Were you women subject to that kind of thing?

Allord: Oh, yeah. We weren't exempt. In some of the drill practices, we did have some men DI's, and obviously they weren't too happy to be assigned to drilling and training women. And of course, being called knuckleheads and such was a little foreign to me. Before it was over I had vowed that some day I was going to kill the DI, which of course, quickly faded after— I did meet him a year later. I was out sailing and happened to run into him. Of course, I told him what I had thought and he just laughed and said, "well, you weren't alone!"

Mark: Did you have any women drill instructors?

Allord: Oh yes.

Mark: Were they tougher than the men?

Allord: About the same. But they were very good. Very well trained and in fact, some of our drill I think probably got more complicated than the men's. We'd get bored with regular training and do a lot of what we called "boogie woogie" drill. I loved it.

Mark: Did the women instructors use as many four-letter words as the men?

Allord: No. Absolutely not.

Mark: But the male drill instructors did?

Allord: Well, not four letter words as such. Kind of derogatory but not. In fact it was obvious that the men had strict instructions to watch their language. In fact, in my whole military service I had heard no foul language, which seems strange.

Mark: That seems remarkable, especially for the Marines.

Allord: We heard none of them. It came right down from the commandant himself. When I was assigned to my regular duty and worked the night shift, I would eat in a men's mess hall and the minute we came through the door, somebody would always yell, good naturedly of course, "Watch your language, women on board". And they adhered to it strictly.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

- Mark: Did you and the other women appreciate that?
- Allord: Yes. Very much, very much. Because I still see no reason for foul language.
- Mark: So your basic training lasted how long?
- Allord: Six weeks.
- Mark: What sort of training did you do? The men will take weapons training and ...
- Allord: We did have field trips out to the firing range and those that wanted to could fire. I was familiar with firearms, so of course I wanted to fire. I didn't get any Maggie's Drawers if you know what those are.
- Mark: No, I don't.
- Allord: It's if you miss the target they wave a flag from the bunker and it's called Maggie's Drawers.
- Mark: So much of your training consisted of marching around?
- Allord: Yes. We had a lot of classroom. We had military history and naval history because we were actually part of the Navy. We had hygiene, map reading, aircraft recognition, right now I can't think of what else.
- Mark: Was this your first trip outside of Wisconsin? Or the Midwest?
- Allord: No. For a farming family I guess we had traveled a little more than usual. We had visited Chicago quite often and went to the World's Fair up to Canada to my grandfather's birthplace to Niagara Falls. So, no—
- Mark: What I am getting at is that basic training for a lot of people is the first time that they have mixed with people from the east or the south or whatever—
- Allord: That was strange. We were quite aware of eastern and southern accents and to our ears that was a bit different and over Christmas, having a southern pine for a Christmas tree was a little strange.
- Mark: Were there any sort of tensions or animosities in terms of region? Did the southerners refer to you as damn Yankees?
- Allord: No, none of that. They mixed very well. In fact, I still have friends from all parts of the country and there was never any problem there.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Mark: Did you get off the base or post or whatever?

Allord: Base. Not during boot camp. We were confined to base. Everything was strictly military by the book. Even Christmas Eve we marched to midnight mass in platoon formation. So that's how strict it was. But then right after boot camp I was sent to Cherry Point as a casual.

Mark: What was that?

Allord: Not "casualty" but "casual," that meant waiting for an assignment.

Mark: I was going to ask then what happened after—

Allord: OK. Of course, I, from the beginning had asked for control tower and was repeatedly told that the schools were closed. And I don't know why I persisted in asking for control tower but I did and had lots of aptitude tests and they came out with high mechanical result. They offered me "trainer operator" instructing pilots to fly by instruments and I still can't understand why they didn't throw up their hands and send me to cook school or something, which I abhorred.

Mark: But you did get what you wanted.

Allord: Yeah! In fact within two weeks. One day a notice went up in the barracks that they had opened another control tower class in Atlanta, GA and I was on the list. So, I'm wondering if they didn't have an inkling that there might be another school and just sort of let me dangle for a while, which was good.

Mark: You then went to school.

Allord: Right. I boarded another troop train at Cherry Point and went to Atlanta and that was my first real indoctrination in the deep south.

Mark: What were your impressions?

Allord: As we got off the train for the first time, I couldn't believe the segregation of rest rooms, drinking fountains and things like that, black and white.

Mark: Was this the first time you had really seen such a thing?

Allord: Right. So that took a bit of getting used to. Then our training was at a small naval air station just out of Atlanta and half of our class was Navy Waves and half were Marines and we went to school from 2:00 in the afternoon to 10:00 at night in the second deck of an aircraft hangar, which was very noisy.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**



Mark: What sort of instruction were you given?

Allord: Well, of course, it all concentrated on directing air traffic and we had to use ear phones and mikes to even be heard and we had five phases of it included, I don't know if I remember them all, but weather we went into some depth and we learned to read air maps from coast to coast and how these maps worked and we had to learn the language of air traffic and also of ground traffic and things like that.

Mark: The women who were selected to go into this, can you characterize them in some way? They had to have certain aptitudes for example.

Allord: Oh yes. They had strict aptitude tests and had to have perfect vision. In fact, we had to have pilots' vision, which I did at that time. I don't know the results of the aptitude tests but as I learned to know the women that I will work with later I did learn a good share of them were college graduates which I was not and I don't know where I fell into their group. One of my best friends was, for instance, Phi Beta Kappa and others were very, very intelligent people who had come from good backgrounds.

Mark: So this training lasted how long?

Allord: Another six weeks.

Mark: And then you went back to Cherry Point and this was your first duty station?

Allord: That was my first permanent, and last, assignment.

Mark: Perhaps you could describe your duties there.

Allord: Cherry Point is the world's largest Marine Corps air station. It was a final training base before the pilots went overseas. We had just about everything that the Navy and Marine Corps flew. We had fighter planes, F4Us, SVDs. We had B25s, which we called PBJs. We had R4Ds, which is a C47. We had larger bombers, not many, B24's but they were rather scarce but we concentrated mostly on fighter planes and bombers.

Mark: Where did these planes go, did they fly over the ocean to train?

Allord: We had gunnery ranges, of course, we were right near the coast and they had gunnery ranges right on the coast and we took care of their schedules and it was up to us to see that the ranges got their schedules every morning, of which squadrons would be out for practice and we processed all of the squadron's flying schedules. We were all licensed control tower operators but we didn't necessarily work in the tower. We worked in Clearance.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Mark: Did you sometimes work in the tower?

Allord: Yes. We rotated. Eventually, as I was promoted, I became NCO in charge of one of the shifts. We worked rotating shifts every day we rotated until Friday and we worked the same shift for the weekend and we worked seven days a week and once a month got 71 hours free.

Mark: It sounds like a very busy place.

Allord: It was! It was a very stressful job because human errors could cause crashes.

Mark: What was the most stressful part of the job?

Allord: Just keeping up with the traffic because we averaged like - we not only had our own people to take of, we had nine outlying fields and we took care of their traffic too. So in Clearance we had different positions. For instance, one took care of the whole east coast traffic through ATC Center in Washington for cross-country flights. Another position took care of local flights out of Cherry Point. Another position took care of the outlying fields. Another one took care of the counter where pilots came in to file flight plans and all of those had to be transmitted to the tower so they knew what was coming up and when that plane appeared either landing or to take off, they in turn, would call to that position into Clearance. If any plane was a half-hour overdue, we were on alert to watch for it, to inquire, to make calls to see if it had shown up someplace else and alert the OD and if it was an hour overdue, we sent out search planes from Air/Sea Rescue.

Mark: Did this happen?

Allord: Oh, yes. It did happen because planes would have engine trouble. They would land sometimes crashed somewhere and Air-Sea Rescue then had to locate them and of course, pilots couldn't have cared less. The conscientious ones would radio in that they were down at a certain place and quite often in the evening or at night they would send in a teletype what they called an RON (Remain overnight) and quite often their reason was weather or mechanical but all too often they had a girlfriend at that place and of course, we were aware of that and one time even got a teletype that said, "RON, weather - honest!"

Mark; Were there many fatal accidents. Plane crashes.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: There were some, yes. Fortunately none contributed to tower error. Mechanical, perhaps pilot error. One night on the 4-midnight shift we had a B24 coming back from California and on final approach, it blew up. And on the same night we had fighter planes coming back from Florida to an outlying field and two of them were struck by lightning and went down. So that night we lost I think it was 15 men.  
**[Side 1, Tape 1, ends]**

Mark: That was a particularly bad day.

Allord: Yeah. That's right. But it was something we had to deal with and keep our wits about us. Once I was on duty in Clearance and the tower called and said they had a B25 out ready for take off and didn't have clearance for it. So I called the squadron and they said that plane is not scheduled out. So I called the tower and I said that plane is not scheduled out and the Chief Controller was getting a little irate and said, "It's sitting out here." So I called back and said "No. It is supposed to be on the flight line." With that, the plane took off and just got off the ground and one engine caught out. It caught a wing and cart wheeled down the runway. Of course, crash crew went out and radioed back that they could only find a PFC and of course, the tower was yelling at the crash crew find the pilot, which they never did. The PFC had stolen the plane. He was laying out off the runway in the weeds, unconscious. I don't know if he's still in the Brig or not, but when he did come to his intentions were to take it up and crash it into A&R (Assembly and Repair) because he had been denied leave.

Mark: His own kind of kamikaze thing?

Allord: Kamikaze kind of thing. We had a couple of incidents like that and of course we had hot shot pilots that liked to go up and do crazy things like go over the ocean and hedge hop the waves, things like that. Hit one by accident and caught an engine. Come back and landed on half the wheel, he had knocked out his landing gear also.

Mark: Did they get in trouble for that, do you know?

Allord: He was - this fellow Lt. White, called him Whitey, he was confined to barracks as much as he was in the air. He'd fly to New York and start partying and when we got his flight plan coming back, we'd alert the crash crew. But, he was an excellent pilot and something like Pappy Boyington can fly regardless.

Mark: Were all the controllers women or did you work with the men?

Allord: No. We worked with the men too. We were mostly women. The Chief Controller was a man and it was such a stressful job, he actually had two breakdowns during the time I was there and -

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Mark: Was he replaced eventually?

Allord: No. He was that good that they gave him some R&R and brought him back.

Mark: Working between men and women in 1944 and 1945 this was not as common as it is today. Were there any problems associated with that? Or was it a well-oiled machine?

Allord: No. It was a well oiled and packed. When some of the men started coming back from overseas, we expected the worst. We thought they'd be arrogant; they'll not want to be working for us. We were going to be their NCOs and we were very apprehensive but we found none of that. We worked together you might say in perfect harmony and all became good friends and they were like an extended family, they were like brothers really. On days off we'd probably go sailing or something like that. I did sail a lot.

Mark: That's my next topic actually. On what free time you did have, what sort of social activities did you participate in?

Allord: I, of course, was in a little different position. I was already married so not dating. But as I said, I had a lot of friends and we'd go in groups. We'd probably go to a base dance if a big band was there, we'd go in a group. A lot of the fellows had girlfriends back home and the girls did too. Of course some of them were dating. Of the 3,000 women on the base there were three of us had intermediate sailing license and I was one of them so I could take a boat out further in bigger water than the novices. As it turned out, when the crew at the boathouse was really busy they'd ask me to take students out so I did a lot of sailing instructing. Eventually sailed in regattas and things like that. We were only 20 miles from Atlantic Beach so we did go to the beach a lot and then we were also 20 miles the other way from New Bern, NC and they had a women's club just for women.

Mark: Women soldiers and Marines?

Allord: Right. And we spent some time in there. I didn't spend a lot of time there.

Mark: Was this organized by the services or the USO?

Allord: I'm really not sure who it was organized by and we did have USO troops come through. I went to a couple of them but didn't much care for them.

Mark: Did Bob Hope come by some chance?

Allord: No. He was overseas.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Mark: Anyone famous?

Allord: Well, I got to know Tyrone Power quite well. He came in. He was a transport pilot. He came in nearly every day to file a flight plan and we didn't wear nametags but he took the trouble to learn all of our names. I mean not first names; it was Sergeant So and So, Corporal So and So.

Mark: I know the name but I don't know if I've ever seen any of his films.

Allord: Extremely handsome.

Mark: He was famous by this time? When he walked in a room people knew who he was?

Allord: Right. The girls were swooning! In fact, one time I was working counter and he was filing a flight plan with me and a girl came down from her [job] on second floor and glanced over and saw it was Tyrone Power and was heading for the bank of doors across the lobby to go outside, never took her eyes off Tyrone and ran right smack into a pair of open doors at which time I wanted to explode and I didn't dare. I don't know if he knew it or not but he was such a gentleman, he wouldn't have. I also worked with Lana Turner's brother-in-law when she was married to Steve, I can't say the last name. But I worked with him for a while and then he was transferred to an outlying field and in fact it was Bill who told me by telephone of D-Day. That we had invaded Normandy.

Mark: I'm going to ask some questions about your husband and men. As for social activities now were there any sort of restrictions against fraternizing within community? Men and women

Allord: Oh, just officers, enlisted and officers was the only restriction. But that still didn't stop it. A couple of my friends did marry officers. Of course, I spent a lot of my time letter-writing because he was sent to the Pacific and was stationed in New Guinea for a year at Hollandia and they built this big base which was one of the bigger ones in the Pacific and the invasion of the Philippines pretty much came kicked off from there and he was in that and on December 15th of '44 they had gone out up around through the straits heading for Mindora and his LST was spotted and all his equipment on board and it was torpedoed and kamakazied so it was set afire and lost some of his shipmates and they were taken off onto other ships and sent back to New Guinea and then came back to the States on 38 days survivor leave and from there then he went to Panama and was reassigned.

Mark: So you kept in contact by letter?

Allord: Letter, totally.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

- Mark: I suppose there weren't any phones available.
- Allord: Never, never. The only time I got a phone call was when he was shipping out for the Pacific they went from southern California up to Oakland to get more equipment and he did get off and persuaded a Marine guard to take a hike from dock and called me at Cherry Point – collect!
- Mark: Did it get you in trouble?
- Allord: No. Not at all except I didn't have \$5 worth of change or whatever it was and the pay phone was in another barracks so when I got the word I had a collect call, I was running through the barracks collecting handfuls of change for the change and plugging it in and I did get to talk to him just before he shipped out. Then, of course, went back and tried to find out who I owed money to.
- Mark: The types of women who were in the Women's Marines with you, the air controllers, I assume that there were other women soldiers on the base.
- Allord: No, small correction. Marines are never called soldiers. The paper, the media makes that mistake all the time, but no, there were women there doing everything from driving trucks, buses, office work, they were base maintenance personnel. We took over 80% of the base operation. In fact, at our last two Women Marine conventions in San Diego and this fall in Orlando, the commandant was at both of them and told us again, that over 20,000 Women Marines that replaced men to fight, they were able with those 20,000 men to make up the entire 6th Marine Division which turned the tide at Okinawa. So with that, we felt quite proud that we were partly responsible.
- Mark: Of the Women Marines on the base, how many for example, were married such as yourself.
- Allord: Not many. In fact, it was very rare. Some of them were married during their tour, but they could not be stationed at the same base and of course, there were a few pregnancies and they were immediately discharged.
- Mark: It's a sensitive subject, was there a lot of hanky panky going on? I know this was something the military was concerned about.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: Not a lot. From my perspective, I perhaps wasn't out among the—but I suppose there was some. I was in a squadron, fortunately of women who were I would say of very high caliber and what went on in the other squadrons, I don't know that much. We didn't see that much of them. I could probably name one, two, or three pregnancies that I knew of. Of course, they were immediately discharged, unlike today where they have maternity uniforms and stay in and raise their families so things have changed a lot.

Mark: There were a lot of women on this base and a lot of young men. I assume you attracted your share of attention. Not you specifically necessarily, but women

Allord: There were about 3,000 of us to 20,000 of them.

Mark; I suspect you were very popular.

Allord: Well, yeah, you might say that. Of course, there were catcalls and whistles, which was normal. Off base, of course, we were a bit of a curiosity, especially out of that area. If we'd go to New York for instance, we were treated like royalty in New York. They'd all but roll out red carpets for us. No matter how long the civilian lines were, they'd take us. Somebody would escort us to the front of the line, which we felt a little guilty over, but that's how well we were treated.

Mark; Were there episodes of where you or women in general were mistreated? Some didn't like the idea of women in the military. Did you find resistance?

Allord: Well, of course, when the old salts found out that they were taking women into the Marine Corps they thought the Corps was literally going to Hell in a hand basket because they were taking in women, blacks and dogs. So we were all lumped together. The old salts didn't take to that very kindly.

Mark: But they apparently dealt with it.

Allord: They dealt with it and got over it. Actually, our worst treatment was after service where the civilian and military population didn't deal with us as well as when we were in the service.

Mark: I have a whole slew of questions I want to ask about the post war era, I'll try to save that. Many of the men I've interviewed when I get to the social part of the interview—

Allord: What is their reaction?

Mark: To women?

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: Yeah.

Mark: Well, many of the ones I've seen were in a jungle in the Philippines or something and didn't see many. Of those I've actually spoken to about it they spoke very highly of the women in the service.

Allord: That's good to know, because we sometimes wonder what their opinion was.

Mark: Actually, respectful. Given the way gender relations fluctuate and change and these kinds of things, I found it an actual pleasant surprise.

Allord: Before I went in, there were some bad vibes coming out of women in the military and for good reason I found out, because the Army was called the WAAC Women Auxiliary which were not actually a part of the Army and they were not attracting as many as they wanted so they dropped their standards considerably and were taking in a lot of objectionable people and that's where a lot of it stems from and, of course, when they made it the WAC Women Army Corps and took them in as part of the Army, it started getting better. But, reputation wise, that's a lot of where that came from. So the Marine Corps sort of stood back and waited to see how it worked out, and of course, you know that the Marine Corps didn't draft Marines until the very end of the war and they'd take a few draftees and it was obvious if you ran into them there was a difference.

Mark: The way they carry themselves?

Allord: Everything. Their whole attitude, everything. It was obvious they weren't volunteers.

Mark: Many of the military people I speak to talk about drinking in the service. Oftentimes a problem.

Allord: No. It wasn't among the women at all. In fact, we had our own little, it was a Dallas Hut. I don't know if you know what those were.

Mark: No, I don't. Is it like a Quonset hut?

Allord: No, it's smaller. Just a little square building and the sides go up and we had a little beer place and they called it a slop shoot. Isn't that a lovely name? And you could go out and buy beer, but it wasn't that popular and I really never saw anyone come in inebriated, which probably says quite a bit.

Mark: You were stationed in the United States the whole time.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**



Allord: They didn't send women Marines overseas. The farthest they got was Hawaii.

Mark: I wonder if you could comment on how life in the United States changed during World War II. For example, the rationing, censorship. I'm interested in your personal perspective and recollections on how things had changed as a result of the war.

Allord: Well, rationing had started just before I went in so I got in a little of it. But, once we got in we weren't too aware of it. We were given a shoe allotment and we couldn't go out and buy a dozen pair of shoes. So we weren't too affected and even in our own religion, I happen to be Catholic and at that time, Fridays were still meatless days, but that was abolished for the military personnel.

Mark: So if you want to get a car and fill it full of gas and go to the shore for example, were the gas shortages in effect?

Allord: Oh, yeah. You were still affected by gas rationing. I had sold my car when I went in so I didn't have a car, but we had good bus service. If we went any long distance, we flew. We had access to all of the squadrons flight plans so if we wanted to go to New York, we would see which squadron had a plane going. We'd call the squadron and get on their passenger list, show up at the appointed time and take off whether it was New York, Washington, Florida, wherever. So, we spent a lot of time in the air.

Mark: So you were at Cherry Point for your entire wartime experience. Were you there when the Japanese surrendered?

Allord: Yes, I was there, and in fact, I remember VE-Day very well and **[Side 2, Tape 1, Ends]** VE-Day at Cherry Point was a rather drizzly day and I was off-duty at the time and we were on second deck and I heard the Lieutenant tearing up the stairs yelling for volunteers to parade. Well, I was on every parade list that ever came through Cherry Point, I think.

Mark: You enjoyed that sort of thing?

Allord: Yeah, I did. I was on all the guard duty lists too which wasn't that much fun, but I went down the back stairs thinking to myself, "When it's over in the Pacific, I'll be the first one out there to parade. So, I went across the street and sat on the chow hall steps in the drizzle all by myself. That was my VE-Day. But when it was over in the Pacific on VJ-Day it so happened that my father-in-law was in Chicago, very ill, and had had surgery. They thought it was cancer and didn't give him much hope. So my husband was called from Panama, my brother-in-law from the Army in Texas and I was called from Cherry Point so I had arranged once Larry got to Cherry Point, I had flights arranged for us from there to New York to Chicago. We got there and found **Interview Transcript (continued)**

out it wasn't as bad as they thought it was. We visited and then went on to Tomahawk knowing that VJ-Day was just days away and of course, we had my brother-in-law in Army uniform, my husband in Navy and I was in Marine uniform. In Rhinelander we were kind of a real oddity. We went to a bar one night, my husband laid \$5 on the bar and hours later he walked out with the same \$5. No one would allow— you couldn't buy a drink if you wanted to! And then we came back to Madison where we had been living and we were here on VJ-Day and we were driving around the square with all the horns blowing and bells ringing, paper flying out of the Tenney Building and I was driving my husband, sitting on the roof taking movies of it. That night we got together for a big party at my cousins on the lake and there were a lot of others that were home. Her brother-in-law had been a POW in Germany for three years and he was home.

Mark: Just out of curiosity when you were parading around the square were you in uniform?

Allord: Oh yeah! We were in the car, but we were in uniform. Everybody was waving flags and shouting and it was a real, real celebration.

Mark: So the war is over. I assume you had to go back to your assignments.

Allord: Larry had to go back to Panama and I had to go back to Cherry Point and my brother-in-law back to Texas, that was in August. Then Larry got his discharge the end of October and I had enough points to get out, but because of his discharge, I got mine automatically and was not sent to the Separation Center in Lejeune. I got mine directly out of Cherry Point with all the men that were being discharged so that was a bit different. I was lined up with all the men getting shots and watching them pass out.

Mark: And did you?

Allord: No! I would have died rather than pass out!

Mark: So, that was it, you were out?

Allord: So that gave him time to go home, get a car, drive to Cherry Point and pick me up and drive home again and start all over.

Mark: Now we're into the period that I'm most interested in, the post-war period. You mentioned starting all over. Perhaps you could explain what you mean by that.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: Well, of course, neither one of us had jobs and my husband being a welder had a friend who was interested in their starting a welding shop in Middleton, which they did. I then got my transcript to go to the University. Looking at it, I realized that by the time I got into what I really wanted, I'd be out of GI time so I went to MATC instead and went directly into Art. Incidentally, they have always had a good Art course there.

Mark: Did you use the GI Bill for this?

Allord: Yes, I did.

Mark: I have spoken to a lot of men who have used the GI Bill, but I have yet to speak to a woman who has used the GI Bill. Were there many women soldiers and Marines who used the GI Bill?

Allord: I don't think there were a lot. I have friends now that I have learned since have used it, but I went right over here to MATC until we moved out to Middleton. At that time, transportation was a problem so I have always been interested in aviation and we lived just down the road from Morey Field so I applied to transfer from Art to Aviation which was kind of a big switch. So, I had to prove to them that I was qualified for Aviation and had to take two whole days of aptitude tests again and as a result I came out on top in Aviation and second in Art Teacher, which was the furthest thing from my mind and I downplayed my office work that I had done before because I wasn't that interested and I got approval then and both my husband and I got our pilots license through the GI Bill.

Mark: I'm wondering how you knew how to utilize the GI Bill. Was there a pamphlet that someone gave you? Did the military give you advice?

Allord: Yes. I think we were given little pamphlets of what might be available. I did, however, first thing, call Truax Field to inquire about a job because I had a civilian air traffic control license and was told flat out, they didn't hire women. Which now, of course, I would have gone straight through the roof. But at that time there was no arguing. They didn't hire women and they said so. So that was out. Then I pursued it from a different angle.

Mark: After the Vietnam War, problems experienced by veterans of that war in books and the news media, Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and those kinds of things. It is sometimes interesting to ask World War II veterans if they experienced similar things or not. You were also married to a veteran who was torpedoed. I'm interested in an

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

- your, not necessarily reactions to the Vietnam veterans, but given what you know, c you look back in your own experiences and that of your husband and these kinds of things?
- Allord: I, personally, had no problems. At first, when I got out, I felt a little bit at loose ends. I wasn't in a military setting and it was kind of - like I said, at loose ends. But, my husband did have a couple of episodes of I'd say nightmares.
- Mark: How long did these last?
- Allord: Not long. He seemed to get over it. Whether it was on his mind much, I have no idea. But, it wasn't apparent to me. He went right into his work and we got on as I said starting over.
- Mark: I think you mentioned this already; he used the GI Bill as well?
- Allord: Just for his pilot's license, but he didn't use it for anything else. He had his own skills.
- Mark: Did he have trouble finding work?
- Allord: Yeah. He did. Some materials for one thing, were very scarce and he didn't go out and get a job as such, he started his own shop, but of course, competition was already established and it was pretty rough. So, they didn't keep that shop too long and he did find work elsewhere and by '49 he went into the insurance business, which he pursued the rest of his career and got out of welding totally.
- Mark: As for you, we touched on this already but I just want to ask a question about employment in general. What sort of problems did you have finding work after the war or did you not desire to go to work?
- Allord: I went to work for an accounting company for a short time, but we were interested in a family and as I was getting my flight training, in fact I flew most of the time pregnant, which my doctor said was okay, but I don't think he knew what was entailed in flight training. Then I worked a little bit afterward and had a second son and in the meantime was pursuing a lot of art courses and eventually ended up teaching at MATC and taught in the Art Department for six years. Then we were transferred to Wausau so that was the end of that.
- Mark: In the post-war era at least, did you want to work? Did you desire to work or was it an economic decision that you needed the money?
- Allord: Well, we seemed to be getting by okay and when I did work, it was just for extra income, but our focus was on raising our family not in working.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Mark: Do you think that had you not been in the Marines and in the war that you would have wanted to work more?

Allord: I worked but in an entirely different attitude, I guess.

Mark: What do you mean by that?

Allord: Military service changes you a lot, as I'm sure you know. You are not the same person when you come out and I think your whole attitude toward life is different. If something happens and no one was killed in the process, well, it wasn't that bad. Of course, that's the attitude we had to adopt in the control tower. If there was a crash and everybody walked away, no big deal. So I think you kind of carry that attitude toward life. All through life sometimes it has been hard dealing with civilian attitudes. I think that's why we have such a tight group of friends, of all women veterans, and men veterans too, because our thinking, I think, is different.

Mark: I want to come back to something you mentioned before and that involves the treatment of women after the war.

Allord: When we got back to our hometown, my father belonged to the American Legion and the commander of the Legion was a good friend of my husbands. They had been scout leaders together. He promptly invited Larry to join the American Legion Post and invited me to join the Auxiliary. That was kind of a low blow. I said, "No, thank you, but I will be glad to join the Legion Post." It took him aback and he stuttered and stammered and said, "Well, but we don't have any women members." I said, "I'm sure you don't but I qualify, I'm a veteran". So he said, "Well, let me look into it. I'll get back to you." So, we were staying at my folks at the time and in a couple of days he called back and said, "Yes. You do qualify." I said, "Well, I know I do."

Mark: Did you join?

Allord: Yes. We joined together and of course, I was the first woman member of the Post and my father was very proud of it, but I have heard since that some women have had very rude treatment with the military veterans organizations.

Mark: You mean like the VFW?

Allord: Yes, the VFW and still do. In fact, yesterday I met at Michael Jackson's office, with a Dane County Commission on Veterans Affairs which I'm up for approval on that commission and we were talking about it and two of the women are Amy veterans and they said they have had some really rude remarks made to them.

Mark: As late as when?

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: Recently.

Mark: Has this sort of treatment changed over the past 45 years?

Allord: Some, it has changed some but I think that's why Vietnam veterans came back and were treated so badly that when they finally got around to having a big celebration and parade, we were the first ones there to parade and welcome them back, because we could relate to their treatment.

Mark: Do you think that sort of treatment results in a generational attitudes? For example, someone...

Allord: Partially generational, partially macho. Like, some women would walk into say a VFW Post, new, and men would say, "The kitchen is that way" or "The women are that way".

Mark: They would say this on purpose.

Allord: Yeah. Or in stupidity. Well, just this fall on Veterans Day we were at the Capitol and there were nine of us representing various organizations in their observance. We were dressed similarly, we wore our overseas caps, we had red jackets on, and when it was all over, we even had one on the firing squad, and we were all over and we were walking to the Vets Center for a little reception afterward and as we walked along, some fellow came up to one of the gals and said, "You ladies from the Salvation Army really look sharp". That is the type of thing we encounter all the time. They are just totally ignorant.

Mark: Does this sort of treatment, you get this from the younger veterans?

Allord: No, actually the Vietnam veterans treat us very well. But a couple of years ago on Memorial Day we were at Veterans Rest for their ceremony that morning and some of us lined up in the color guard and I was right at the end and two fellows came roaring in late, jumped out of the car and we had already been called to attention. They hollered, "Wait for us." We did. As they approached with their flags and everything, their commander, I don't know who it was said to them, fall in right behind these women." This one great big fellow said, "Since when?" I turned around and looked straight up at him and said, "Just to set the record straight, we are veterans." He just looked over my head. But I was really upset.

Mark: You mentioned that you joined the Legion soon after the war. Did you join any other groups during the post-war years?

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: Not immediately. We moved back here of course, and then were detached from that. My husband did join the VFW in Middleton and I joined the Auxiliary at that time many years ago. But personally there wasn't that much for women. They came back and sort of all were absorbed into the communities.

Mark: I was going to ask, were there many other women in the Madison area, women veterans who joined these groups?

Allord: No, there weren't a lot. In fact, we didn't know about each other until the last few years when we are getting together. Right now I belong to the Marine Corps League.

Mark: When did you join that?

Allord: A couple of years ago. And they're World War II veterans, which its fine with them. Quite a few Vietnam veterans. In all, they don't look down on us. They don't treat us any differently. They don't look at us like a bunch of old ladies or don't treat us like their moms, they treat us like another veteran, which we really appreciate. In fact, Christmas Eve about 4:30 I got a call from San Diego from the...he was the First Sergeant at the Marine Reserves who was then transferred to the Marine Corps Recruiting Depot and he's now the Sergeant Major there and he called me just to talk, which I really appreciated, and he wanted me to pass on his greetings to the other women Marines.

Mark: Now, I know that you are involved with the United Women Veterans, but before we move on to that, I want to pose this question to you: Why did you join these groups in the first place? What did you hope to get out of it?

Allord: First of all, I joined the Women Marines Association; I joined the National and was not really involved except being a member.

Mark: When did you join them?

Allord: In the '70's. Then I learned that there was a state chapter, so I joined the state chapter and became acquainted with more local women and then someone started the United Women Veterans and I got a call to join that, which I did and it was kind of tough going for a while getting it together.

Mark: Was it organized here in Madison?

Allord: Right. I was a charter member of that and as of right now, I edit their newsletter.

Mark: I enjoy reading it.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: Which sometimes has a lot of booboos in it. As I go through the mound on my desk I forget to put in this or that, but...

Mark: As for the United Women Veterans, what would you say is the impetus for joining it, who joins it and what do you and your fellow members get out of it?

Allord: I think just the camaraderie with these other women veterans and we are from all branches of service, as you know. Each branch has its own little cliques, but still we intermingle very, very well.

Mark: And there are different eras too.

Allord: Oh yeah. We're from World War II down through Vietnam. Maria Cleaver is one of our members and of course, Phyllis Perk, who you know. So, we're getting more and more involved in veterans affairs which I'm very interested in because I feel that not only from a woman's standpoint, I feel that all veterans in general, are treated very badly by the government.

Mark: So what are the main activities of the United Women Veterans, does it involve better benefits, respect for the women who served?

Allord: Both. We would like to public to know that women served also, which a lot of them still aren't aware of. I don't know if they live in caves or what, but we're interested in benefits for all veterans, not just women veterans. I think they are getting a real kick in the teeth to put in bluntly. My husband has had ear problems ever since the Pacific, the concussions, explosions and what not.

Mark: Still does?

Allord: Oh yeah, he's very deaf. For a while he was able to get treatment at the VA and now he's been cut off entirely. We aren't quite in the poor house, which you almost have to be and of course, we are very interested in homeless veterans. I've been involved in the two "Stand Downs" for homeless veterans. Right now, I'm terribly upset with the government giving \$25,000 allotments to Russian officers for housing when we have 250,000 homeless ourselves. So it's that kind of thing that I'm interested in.

Mark: So your group is about how many women now?

Allord: The United Women Veterans I'd say 80-some, from within the state and a few from out of state.

Mark: Are you currently a member of any other groups? Are you still a Legion member?

**Interview Transcript (continued)**



- Allord: No. Just the VFW Auxiliary and only because my husband is a member and I'm an officer, a trustee in that too.
- Mark: Have you attended any reunions?
- Allord: Oh yeah. In fact, just in September I was in Orlando at a Woman Marines convention and of course, we got together and have gotten to know not only the women we worked with, at each convention I roomed with one of my friends and we've met a lot of others and we're active and four conventions now, I've put together our achievement book for our chapter and submitted it for competition and we've won a first each time.
- Mark: Congratulations!
- Allord: Thank you. And get not only our certificates, but we get a steamer for our banner.
- Mark: When did you begin attending these reunions?
- Allord: In '86, I think was my first one in California and I've been to Savannah, Denver, San Diego, Florida and the next one's in San Antonio. But before that, when you're busy raising a family, you just can't take off and go to all those things. But [**Side 1, Tape 2, Ends**] now that we're retired, I can do that.
- Mark: You have exhausted my line of questioning, is there anything you'd like to add?
- Allord: Well, since the last few years, I've also become an advocate of Senior Fitness and have been active in Senior Olympics and have competed.
- Mark: What do you do?
- Allord: Track. I've got a lot of medals for that. I've gone to state, I went to national in '91 and I still belong to a health club and work out three times a week at least. Veteran's affairs takes up a lot of my time and senior fitness does also. I also the last ten years of my working career was a Realtor and then my voice went bad about the time I was to retire anyway. I'm busier now than when I was working.
- Mark: I find that with many of the retired people I've interviewed. It's hard to pin them down sometimes.
- Allord: Yeah. My kids always have to make appointments.
- Mark: Well, I thank you so much for coming in.

**Interview Transcript (continued)**

Allord: You're so welcome. Oh, I might mention too, our firstborn, one of the reasons we enlisted was to make the world and the country free for our children. Ironically, our firstborn became a Marine, spent 20 years in the Marine Corps and two tours in Vietnam and retired a Major in the Marine Corps.  
**[End of Interview, Side 2, Tape 2]**