



**MARY ARNETTE LYNN JANES**  
**USNR, AMM2/c**

I was always interested in the Navy. I belonged to an organization called -- American Girl Sea Cadets. We met regularly and wore white uniforms. We marched in parades. My father was in the Navy during WWI. My brother was an engineer in the Merchant Marines during WWII and I had a cousin who was a cook aboard a battleship.

I was taking dancing lessons before Pearl Harbor -- with the intention of going into show business. Pearl Harbor put all that on hold. I was in the first class at Hunter College. I was called up on the day I was to go to the Metropolitan Opera to hear Aida.

After basic training -- mostly marching and learning how to pass inspection -- many were sent to Aviation Machinists School in Oklahoma. The train we were sent on was a real oldie -- could open the windows and get coal dust all over you. Busses met our train and as we entered the base, the sailors all booed. The barracks had two floors and cold water. We had to learn to have no privacy -- in dressing and in the shower.

The base was close to Norman and the University of Oklahoma. While at the base, three of us formed a WAVE trio. Tex Beneke from Glenn Miller's Orchestra had formed an orchestra on the base. We sang with them several times -- on base and at the university.

There was sort of a "Toonerville" trolley from the base to Oklahoma City. We used it when we had liberty. The YWCA set up cots in the gym and we could enjoy a reasonable weekend. We could use the pool and eat in the cafeteria. Churches were very friendly and invited service men and women to their homes. Two elderly ladies kept in touch with me for a long time. My mother and I appeared on Major Bowes radio show and they (the elderly ladies) happened to hear it and wrote us a letter about it.

One time we had Blackstone the magician appear for a show in the auditorium. Our barracks were quarantined at the time, so he came over and put on a show for us. One of the girls was diagnosed with

meningitis -- so we had to take silver dollar-size tablets. We were all separated at mess.

After graduation, many of us were sent to Milton, Florida -- one of the many bases around Pensacola. More cold showers again. We had some privacy here. The bunks were placed with the lockers next to them. With doors to the lockers open, it gave you the feeling of a room. We were four to this arrangement

We had some German POW's here and the Coast Guard patrolled the base. Also had French and British pilots training here. The Brits used the PBY's (used to spot submarines).

We had some shows at the base, also took them to other bases. Had a very good orchestra, some singers and dancers and one magician. I met Robert Lee Janes on one of the busses. We raised dollars for War Bonds on the flat bed of a truck.

I was a plane captain. We had a plane assigned to us and it was our job to gas it, oil it, and check it over before flight, move the chocks and signal the pilot out onto the runway. It was fun at night! The gasoline was in the ground with the hoses to be pulled out. One time on a night flight, I fell into that hole in the ground! One time I was on the line with all the odd planes -- gassing them from the truck. The handle got stuck and I was showered with gasoline. I rushed to my barracks and took a shower and changed my clothes. The sailors sort of resented us -- we replaced the men sent on overseas duty.

A large theatrical production, "Navigators Holiday," was shown at the auditorium at the Pensacola Naval Base. The Navy was trying to imitate "Tars and Spars" and hoped some big producer would make a film. Never happened. Rehearsals were at night -- had a large orchestra, scenery and costumes. My dancing partner and I were quite popular with the sailors and whenever we danced at one of the dances we were surrounded.

Some of the WAVES worked on planes in the hanger and the parachute loft. Some of the girls signed up for overseas duty -- I almost did, but I wanted to come home. It was an interesting experience. Wish that I had kept us with some of the gals.