



## Dorothy (Cole) Libby, YN1

**USNR 21 Jan 1943—2 Feb 1946**

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When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, I was working as a secretary in Minneapolis. I felt very strongly that our family should be represented in the military, but there wasn't a chance with eight siblings younger than I and only one older brother whom my father needed on the farm in eastern North Dakota. Farm boys were exempt from the draft.

In June 1942 the WACs accepted the first 200 women from Minneapolis. That evening as we discussed the day's news at dinner, I shocked my landlady, a minister's widow who kept roomers and boarders, by saying that if I were 21 I would have been first in line for the WACs!

When I learned that the Navy would accept 20-yr olds with parents' signature, I convinced my parents on Christmas Day 1942 to sign for me, and was sworn in on 21 January 1943. After six weeks of boot camp at Hunter College, I was promoted to yeoman third-class and sent directly to Washington, DC to serve as secretary to Commander, later Captain, William J. Sebald, Head of the Pacific Section, Combat Intelligence Division, Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet. Having practiced international law in Japan for ten years prior to the war, he was the Navy's top authority on the Japanese.

Everything our office handled was TOP SECRET-ULTRA, and security was tightly controlled. Each day my boss dictated an enemy intelligence report that was delivered by officer courier to the President and returned to our office the following day when the new report was delivered. Occasionally both President Roosevelt and later President Truman penciled comments in the margins. It was a source of special pride to me knowing that the President read my typewritten words!

The most exciting incident of my 3-yr. career in the WAVES occurred on 14 August 1945, when Captain Sebald asked me to remain after five o'clock to type the Navy press release announcing the Japanese surrender; then riding home from work on the bus, not being able to tell the wonderful news to anyone until after it was aired on radio at 7 p.m.!

Captain Sebald was awarded the Bronze medal, highest award for non-combat duty. There were no medals for WAVES, only letters of commendation. He was discharged in November 1945 to serve as legal advisor on General MacArthur's occupational staff in Japan. He offered to make all arrangements for me to go to Japan

and continue as his secretary, but I had received my engagement ring just two weeks earlier from Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Norbert Libby, whom I met in June 1944, and was anxious for discharge. By 2 February 1946 I had accumulated sufficient points for discharge, and we were married in Park River, North Dakota on the 18th of February 1946.

We enrolled in college on the GI Bill, graduating together with B.S. degrees in 1949. Norb taught 15 years in Michigan high schools and 15 years at Ferris State University. I taught for 26 years in Michigan high schools, and we had three sons and one daughter. After retirement, we spent winters in Arizona, where he suffered a fatal heart attack in 1992. I continue to drive to Arizona for winters, and am still active in volunteer work, still using my shorthand skill to take the minutes of Board of Directors meetings at church in Arizona.

Dorothy Libby—31 May 2002



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