



**DELORES SHINALL WALK, YN1/c**  
**USNR/USN - 734-43-52**  
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My life began in Portland, Oregon, where I was born on November 15, 1924. My mother was seventeen years of age. My parents later divorced and my mother, brother and I moved to Lewiston, ID, in 1930. This was in the middle of the Great Depression and I have vivid memories of using cardboard in my shoes to keep the rain out of the hole in the sole. Later on we were able to use glue-on rubber soles that were fine until they came loose in the rain and flapped as I walked. It was a great day when "my turn" came for a new pair of shoes!

One of the early disappointments in my life came when I was in the fourth grade and wanted to join the Harmonica Club. However, it cost 50 cents for the harmonica and we didn't have money for that purpose. It seems sort of insignificant now, but then it made me realize what it was like not to have money for anything but the essentials of life.

I graduated from Lewiston High School in May 1942, at the age of 17. It was a time of turmoil for our class and during the year and after graduation most of the boys were off to war. Because I did not want to become a teacher, I opted not to go on to school at the Lewiston Normal School, and that was my only resource for a college education at the time.

Three days after graduation I received a call from the secretary of the chamber of commerce telling me of the possibility of working for the Office of Price Administration (Rationing Board) that was just starting up. There was a problem with my age and working for Civil Service, but a few political strings were pulled and I was hired.

When the Navy announced the WAVES program, I started beating a path to the door of the Navy recruiter. However, you had to be 20 years of age, and no exceptions. It was hard to accept because my brother at age 17 was now in the Navy and headed for destroyer duty.

My day came and on November 15, 1944, I was sworn into the USNR in Seattle and came home to wait for orders. The day after Thanksgiving there were four of us that took the bus from Lewiston to Pendleton, OR, to join the troop train. That was an adventure in itself.

We landed in Hoboken, NJ, some days later and were greeted by a WAVE officer trying to get our attention by yelling, "Seamen, Seamen!" Who the heck were seamen?

Boot camp at Hunter in the middle of winter was a real experience. I was on the top floor of one of the apartment buildings and what a race that was to get up the stairs to a bathroom that twelve of us were sharing in our apartment. Modesty went out the window in a situation like that. We had three sets of bunks in two rooms. We marched by the reservoir, in the wind and freezing cold, with thin gloves on our hands and were not permitted to put them in our pockets.

After boot camp I was sent to Cedar Falls, IA, for yeoman school. This was a college campus, Iowa State Teacher's College, that the Navy had taken over to use as a training school for WAVES. Like the majority of yeoman school graduates, I was sent to Washington, D.C. for duty.

During the time I was in Washington I was stationed with the Bureau of Aeronautics and Chief of Naval Operations at the Navy Department on Constitution Avenue (it no longer exists). I advanced in rating to Y1C while in Washington and then requested a transfer to Moffett Field, CA, for duty with the Naval Air Transport Service. I left Washington in a snow storm in February 1947, to arrive in sunny California.

My duty with NATS as a yeoman in Staff Engineering also gave me the opportunity to serve as a flight orderly for what was supposed to be one trip a month. The Captain in charge thought I needed the extra 50% of base pay to help pay for the new car I had bought. The one trip a month turned into two or three and it gave me a lot of air time. Some of us were fortunate to fly on the Constitution, one of the earlier jumbo jets -- without the "jets." What they used were JATO assists (jet assist take-off boosters).

It had two levels and held about 300 passengers. You should have seen us scrambling eggs for that many people. We also served what I think now was the forerunner of the TV dinner; they were called Maxson meals.

This same Captain liked the WAVES and thought that all of us serving on the staff of NATS should have a trip to Hawaii on a MARS seaplane. Of course, we had to work our way over as orderlies on dependent flights. As we approached Honolulu the flight captain told us to have all of the mothers give their babies a bottle so the altitude change wouldn't affect their ears. As we hit the water and bumped along in the bay they all promptly got sick and that is how I earned that trip cleaning up the mess.

In July 1948, the Navy allowed us to reenlist from USNR to USN. They gave us incentive pay, but I can't remember how much. So, I was discharged from the USNR and then enlisted in USN. I have two discharges for my time in service.

I married John, a high school sweetheart, December 31, 1948, in Palo Alto, CA. He had served in the Merchant Marine and after we were married he was immediately drafted into the Army. Of course, a first pregnancy occurred rather fast (no contraceptive pills in those days). So, the first discrimination between the sexes was that pregnancy meant discharge.

My time in service brings back many fond memories. I still have my boot camp buddy, Mary O'Malley, as a friend. Elaine Euscher is still a friend from Moffett Field days and the many, many other acquaintances that I have made during conventions and friends of friends make the list endless.

In this high-tec world I was able to meet Dolores Maillette by e-mail and this has grown into a Michigan-Washington friendship for the past three years. We met in person for the first time at the Boston convention. I was able to spend a week with her and her delightful family in October 1998, in Bay City, MI.

The friendships and camaraderie that I have experienced with the members of our unit has been an unexpected gift. After all, to quote Tom Brokaw, we do belong to, "The Greatest Generation." I treasure this part of my life.