

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR**

**Center for Pacific War Studies**

**Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview With**

**Annabel Robb Ring**

**Huntington, Indiana**

**July 6, 2010**

**Pharmacist's Mate-WAVES**

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is July 6, 2010. I am interviewing Annabel Robb Ring at the home of her daughter Gloria Hizer in Winamac Indiana. Her telephone number is 260-356-7471. Her address is 707 Keswick Huntington, Indiana 46750. This interview is in support of The National Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Annabel, I would like to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I would like to thank you for the service to our country during World War II.

Mrs. Ring

Thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mrs. Ring

I was born in Huntington, Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer

When is your birthday?

Mrs. Ring

April 24, 1923

Mr. Misenhimer

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Mrs. Ring

I have one sister.

Mr. Misenhimer

I also understand that she was also in the Navy.

Mrs. Ring

Yes, she is two years older than I am. She and I both went into the Navy at the same time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Maybe you could give me her phone number as well so that I may also give her an interview.

Mrs. Ring

Ok

Mr. Misenhimer

You grew up during the depression.

Mrs. Ring

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did the depression affect you and your family?

Mrs. Ring

We were not exactly poor; my dad had a grocery store and did farming too. We got by and we were never without electricity

or running water. But it was rough I know, a rough time, but we made it through and I went to a country school. Had to walk two miles to school. People don't believe it but we did.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you have a garden, that sort of thing?

Mrs. Ring

Yes, yes we've had gardens over the years. We always had gardens.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have many chickens or anything like that?

Mrs. Ring

Yes, we lived on a farm. Are you talking about during the depression?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, during the depression.

Mrs. Ring

Ok, let me see. My dad had the grocery store and I don't think we had anything other than a small garden but nothing big then until we moved out on the farm in 1933, which was kind of the end of the depression, and he farmed and we raised our own vegetables.

Mr. Misenhimer

Those were rough times back in those days.

Mrs. Ring

Oh yeah, some of the people really had it rough.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now December 7, 1941 is when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

Do you remember hearing about that?

Mrs. Ring

Yes, they talked about Pearl Harbor being bombed and I said what is Pearl Harbor, I had never heard of it, so I was kind of in the dark. I soon found.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you feel about how that would affect you?

Mrs. Ring

I didn't think much about it, I just knew it was something terrible going on but I was in college at the time. I went to Huntington College and right after I graduated.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mrs. Ring

Andrews High School, Andrews Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you graduate?

Mrs. Ring

1941

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished high school what did you do?

Mrs. Ring

I had a few jobs in the summer then I went to Huntington College in September of 1941.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then what did you do?

Mrs. Ring

I was in college for just a year but that is when Pearl Harbor happened and I wasn't aware of where Pearl Harbor was I hadn't heard about it. I was kind of in the dark but eventually I understood about it and I realized there was a war on and some of the college fellows started leaving when they were being drafted into the service. But I stayed on there until the end of the semester then I went to work in Fort Wayne with my sister, we both had jobs there and she for some reason talked to somebody or something that she wanted to join the Navy WAVES and she asked me if I would like to and I said yes I'd love to. I didn't know anything about them but I just did what my sister said. She's two years older than I am. So we went down and signed up and they told me I wasn't old enough. I was two months shy of being twenty and I said well can't you go ahead and sign me up and by the time the paperwork is done

I'll be twenty years old. They just laughed and pushed me through but she was still two weeks ahead of me in everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

You actually went in on May 6, 1943?

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go in? Fort Wayne?

Mrs. Ring

Yes, that's where we left from and went to Chicago first to take test and all the things we needed to do, then they sent us home and then they gave us the assignment that we were to leave to go to New York, the Bronx. I think she went two weeks ahead of me as usual then I went on to the Bronx and that is where the boot camp was and that is where they did all the training just like they did with the fellows. They had marching and they had classes and they had drills and they had the usual things. The military had taken over this women's college, it's a beautiful place and across the street were a lot of apartments so they took those over for us to live in.

Mr. Misenhimer

What all did you study there in that boot camp?

Mrs. Ring

We just had the identification of airplanes and ships and all about the war, just about a little bit of everything, survival, I can't remember all of the things they had there was so much, but we marched and did a lot of exercising and that's about it. But we were real busy and we were tired and by the time we got across the street to our apartments we were all pretty tired. Then I remember they gave us our shots and when you got them the weather was so hot all the time it was terribly hot in the 90's and they gave us one shot and I got a reaction to it. I was having chills and fever and we had a blackout so we had to go out in the hallway with a blanket and I was roasting but everyone was giving me water and wet cloths and I survived.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long was your boot camp?

Mrs. Ring

6 weeks

Mr. Misenhimer

What was a typical day like? What time did you get up?

Mrs. Ring

We would get up about five o'clock and we would go to eat at the chow hall and then you would go to your classes and then you would stop and go march and then you would go exercise



then go back to class then about evening there was entertainment, I told you about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who all did you have there?

Mrs. Ring

Some of the visitors, famous visitors were Mrs. Roosevelt, she came and she reviewed our group and Madam Chiang Kai-Shek and in the entertainment they had Frank Sinatra and Kate Smith and many more movie actors and entertainers that came to entertain us.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you finished boot camp where did you go?

Mrs. Ring

I got on the train and I went Great Lakes in Chicago, Illinois and that was medical school and that's the North side of Chicago the Great Lakes. There were several hundred, I don't know in the barracks I can't remember how many but we would go to class and then we would go work in the ward and different things and take care of different patients and work with the doctors, nurses and specialist and in the evening we would study. We didn't get out much, I think on the weekend we could get on the train and go to Chicago or someplace but we usually didn't because we were too tired. I did get to go

home to Huntington I think once or twice on the train and one time I took one of the patients that he was so home sick so he rode along with me, he was on crutches and went to Huntington with me which was about a four hour ride on the train and stayed the weekend. He appreciated that because he couldn't get to his home, it was to far away.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the length of the day while you were there? What time in the morning till how long?

Mrs. Ring

Get up about five o'clock and then we would work until about seven o'clock in the evening I suppose.

Mr. Misenhimer

The patients you were treating, were any of them war wounds?

Mrs. Ring

Yes, yes some of them have been returned veterans or injured or sick or some of the sailors were at Great Lakes, a different group.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you lived in the barracks there right?

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

About one hundred people did you say?

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

Now did you have to clean the floors and make sure the floors were clean?

Mrs. Ring

No, I don't think we did that much there but I remember having to do "watch", they call it "watch" where you would have to set up and go with a patient and stay a couple hours with them to help at maybe all hours of the night or day, that's what they call "watch" but no I don't remember having to do any of that until we go to Patuxent River then we had to make the beds and wash the beds. We didn't do much floor scrubbing.

Mr. Misenhimer

I'm talking about the barracks where you lived.

Mrs. Ring

No, we didn't have to do that.

Mr. Misenhimer

You went from Great Lakes to where?

Mrs. Ring

To Patuxent River, Maryland, it was seventy-five miles south of Washington D.C. Went on the train and all along I picked up

girls who were going to go there too, there were about six of us I guess that got there at the same time and there was an old station wagon waiting there and took us the seventy-five miles down to the Patuxent River, it was just a new base it had just been built and they were only about so many WAVES, about fifteen WAVES or something but when we left there was three hundred WAVES so you knew it grew. The whole base was growing and there were thousands of sailors and a flight test place where they tested the airplanes and it was right on the Chesapeake Bay and we could go down and swim down! The Chesapeake Bay for recreation except they had jelly fish so bad we didn't do much swimming. They had a big movie theatre and things for us do and they had dances but we had long hours. At the hospital especially we would go to work at seven o'clock and work till five o'clock one day and then seven o'clock to ten o'clock the next day and every other weekend we would have a long weekend you would work ten hours three days straight so it was pretty hard. We had to work hard there. We made the beds and cleaned up and did that and washed the beds up but we didn't scrub the floors or anything like that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you treating patients there?

Mrs. Ring

Yes, we had some from the base and some that were sent in from other areas and we had civilians. We had a dependent ward that were wives of some of the people that were there and we had a baby one time there that we had no supplies for so the poor baby had to sleep in the drawer and we used dish towels for diapers, that's what I said they were just getting ready to help people so it was kind of a surprise but meanwhile good times there and good friends.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you there then?

Mrs. Ring

About two years and then I went to dentist school down in Quantico Virginia. At Patuxent River you'd work a different ward, you'd work in the ward, you'd work in the x-ray you'd work in the emergency room in the surgery and all the different places and I worked in the dental office and I kind of liked it so they sent me to dental school in Quantico so I went down there in Quantico Virginia. There were about fifty girls in the dental class and we'd work with the dentist and then we would go to class. We'd come back and work with the dentist and then we had a graduation after we were done. Then after the war was over while I was there. Then I got out in October.

Mr. Misenhimer

October 1945?

Mrs. Ring

1945, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was it much of a change going into the Dentist School? Was that quite a change?

Mrs. Ring

It was different but I liked working when I did work at the Patuxent River I liked working there and it was kind of interesting, I thought I'd like to do this and they said they needed more technicians so he said ok well send her down there. I hated leaving my friends because for two years while I was there at Patuxent River I got scarlet fever that's when it was going around and I was working in the ward, the contagious ward and that's where I caught it and I was in bed for twenty-one days and that was the worst time of my life but I couldn't have my friends in, I couldn't have any gifts brought in, I couldn't do anything and couldn't get out so there was two of us to a room and it was over Christmas. Well, we were all kind of down so we decided we'd have our own Christmas tree so somebody gave us a limb, they'd hand things through the window to us because they couldn't come in the ward. They gave us a twig and we put it in a bottle and we put little cotton

balls and safety pins that was our Christmas tree and Christmas morning we all woke and here on our bed was great big Christmas stocking that some group of people got us gifts. Inside of the stocking there was a little bit of everything and we had shaving cream and we would go stand in the doorway and somebody across the hall would say I got something else so we would trade shaving cream and germs back and forth so it was kind of fun. I know there was one guy that worked in the bakery, he was an old time sailor and he was such a nice old guy and he felt sorry for me so one day he brought me down a pie and I didn't feel like eating anything but here he gave me this pie because he felt sorry for me so I think the crew got to eat it. Lot of good experiences!

Mr. Misenhimer

They say you were a Pharmacist's Mate.

Mrs. Ring

Pharmacist Mate, you started out as a hospital apprentice and then you worked up, it would go hospital third class, then you've got second class, then you could go to hospital first class and I was hospital second class and then of course the war was over so it was kind of hard to get a higher rating.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that considered to be a petty officer?

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

Any comical things happen along the way? Any things you can think of?

Mrs. Ring

(Laughing) My good friends Becky and Helen, they were my two bunk mates, we were together all the time and you are never allowed to be in civilian clothes out in public. Well one day we wanted to go for a walk so we put on some slacks and some plaid shirts and started on our walk and the Marines caught us and said we were out of uniform. He said the only time you can be out of uniform and in civilian clothes is if you are engaged in sports and my friend Becky says we are engaged in sports, we are hiking, and the Marines kind of laughed and said ok. (Laughing) That was one thing that was kind of funny. They had some other things. They had a little church, this was an old territory and there was a little church that had been there forever and it was called Lord Baltimore Church and it was very old and quaint, real beautiful little church and that's where we had the church services for the different religions. One of our friends was on test flight and she was flying with a sailor on a test and they had a wreck and she was killed. So



they had her funeral in this church and everyone was around, they had the Taps and all the sad things. They sent her body to, I think she was from Illinois and my friend Becky went along to accompany the body so that was kind of interesting. Funny things?

Mr. Misenhimer

Any other interesting things like that, that was interesting.

Mrs. Ring

I did have a lot of boyfriends I'd date here and date there. I went out with one fellow and he was Jewish and someone said you are going out with a Jewish and I said what's Jewish? I said he's just a friend what's wrong with him being Jewish? They had black people but all of the black people were segregated and I said well they don't bother me they were just another patient. I just took care of them like I would a white man it didn't matter to me.

Mr. Misenhimer

So there was a separate place in the hospital then?

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the various officers you had over you?

Mrs. Ring

Well we liked some of them, we didn't mingle with them very much but the doctors were all officers, we admired what they did and were very helpful.

Mr. Misenhimer

The doctors, were most of them civilians that were coming into the service?

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

They weren't necessarily career Navy.

Mrs. Ring

No, most of them were just taken in, might have been a few that have been career and some of the higher ups.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that your last assignment? Was dental school your last assignment then?

Mrs. Ring

Yes and then when I was helping when all the Marines were coming in to be discharged and we had to check their teeth and I know when I went to pull their records and this one guy came in and the doctor said, "oh look at this guys teeth he must be from Texas they have good teeth down there". And then he just called everybody in to have them see this.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened? Anywhere in the service.

Mrs. Ring

I had scarlet fever.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes you did. How about all these boys you dated, tell us a little more about that.

Mrs. Ring

We would go to the movies or take a walk nobody had cars, you know. We just went out with the guys and walk down to the movies and then they would have a dance and then you would dance with this guy and that guy and you would go swimming and go play tennis and that was about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were these mostly sailors?

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they work in the hospital or anything like that?

Mrs. Ring

No they were just all on the base, just good friends. I never heard any fowl language from any of the guys that we were ever around they were all very nice.

Mr. Misenhimer

What day did you say you were discharged?

Mrs. Ring

November 1945

Mr. Misenhimer

What was it like to go back to civilian life?

Mrs. Ring

It was kind of strange but I was thinking of the day that I left Quantico I had to go into Washington and wait for my train and I had hours to do that and I thought "oh gosh", I was all by myself and I thought what am I going to do? We toured Washington, I enjoyed that so much every time we would have a leave or a weekend off a bunch of us would go sight seeing and I always enjoyed all the statues and I thought I'm going to go up to the Lincoln Memorial. I went up there all by myself and sat with Abraham Lincoln and waited for the time for my train to go and I was so lost. It seemed like going home I just felt lost because I was not use to all the quietness. So I got home and I stayed a few days and went down and got a job with a dentist that had just got out of the service and I worked for

him for awhile then I went to the local hospital and worked there for about two years. Then I got married and then I quit and started raising kids. Is there anything else?

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a GI bill or anything like that?

Mrs. Ring

I could've gone to school. I just didn't, I didn't want too. A lot of them did go off to schools but I had a job and I was happy doing that and I was living with my folks and they lived close to the hospital where I worked.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you actually get a nurse's degree or anything like that?

Mrs. Ring

No

Mr. Misenhimer

You weren't called a nurse, worked as a nurse though?

Mrs. Ring

Well they were the registered Nurses; I mean they had got their degree in Nursing.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean in the Civilian life.

Mrs. Ring

Yes, I couldn't give a shot in the hospital but I did like Nurse's Aide in the hospital but when I was in the Navy we could give shots and do all the things the Nurse's did. We were called Corpsmen.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you were showing me pictures a while ago, what were those pictures you were showing me?

Mrs. Ring

There were pictures of my sister and me. Here's the one of my sister and I in the WAVES together and we were considered the only sisters in Indiana that went into the service but that there were a lot of brothers that went in groups but not sisters.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't go through boot camp or anything like that together did you?

Mrs. Ring

We did but we were two weeks apart because I hardly saw her.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were not in the same class?

Mrs. Ring

No, because she was two weeks ahead of me and the only time I did see her was when she was serving in the chow line and I went through and I could say hi but at the end we were allowed

to get together and took a day and toured New York City and then she left Milledgeville Georgia to storekeeper school and then I left to go to Patuxent River so we were together in that and there's a picture of us.

Mr. Misenhimer

Two of them there in their WAVES uniform with their hats and all of that.

Mrs. Ring

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the WAVES uniforms, did you like those?

Mrs. Ring

Oh yes, they were comfortable!

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever wear slacks at all?

Mrs. Ring

The only ones that wore slacks were the girls that were mechanics did repair work on the airplanes and trucks or something.

Mr. Misenhimer

As far as your wardrobe you never wore slacks?

Mrs. Ring

No, the only time we did is when the Marines caught us. Then they did a stamp honoring the women that were in the service. The WAVES and the Coast Guard.

Mr. Misenhimer

Stamp on women came out in 1997, \$.32.

Mrs. Ring

Back when it was \$.32. And now this is a picture of my best friend, I just saw her here a few weeks ago and we get together a couple times a year. She had a sad life to begin with, her twelve year old little sister died in a bicycle wreck and then one of her brothers was killed over in Belgium and he is still buried over there. She came home, she had a big family of brothers and two of them were killed in accidents but she was always the one that cheered us up. We had a good time, we went to Chicago, my sister went to that too but she didn't stay for the dinner and then this was at the dedication of the Women's Memorial in Washington D.C. in 2009.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year, 2009?

Mrs. Ring

Yes, and I made sweatshirts for my daughter who was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force Reserves and I made one for myself and my friend with our Navy symbol on the front.



Mr. Misenhimer

And that's the World War II Memorial?

Mrs. Ring

Yes that was in 1997 and then this is me 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

I see you are in your WAVE uniform again.

Mrs. Ring

Yes, I had curly hair there and this is my sister. Her husband was stationed at Pearl Harbor when Pearl Harbor was struck and he was injured over there, just slightly but he stayed in the Navy, well he retired from there. She met him down in New Orleans and they got married down there and then she got out of the service and he stayed in so they moved around, they were in Hawaii, Guam and Florida and I don't know where else.

Mr. Misenhimer

Could you have stayed in even if you had wanted to?

Mrs. Ring

No, they closed the door, but now instead of WAVES the women are just a part of the Navy they are not called WAVES. WAVES were Women Accepted for Voluntary Service. I know some people don't know that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows?

Mrs. Ring

Oh yes, they would come around and we enjoyed those. It was great, we'd see the famous people who would come sing and entertain.

Gloria Hizer, Mrs. Ring's Daughter

My dad got Bing Crosby's autograph, would you like to see the pictures?

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you come home with any souvenirs from the service?

Mrs. Ring

I don't think so; I worked at the hospital so I didn't think there was much I could bring home. When they said the war was over, funny thing about my friend Becky she was always making jokes. One night we were working in the ward and pretty soon they said the "War is Over" the "War is Over" so she starts running down the hallways saying, "all you patients get out and get your own darn bed pans the War is Over we are done". All the patients started laughing and she was carrying on.

Mr. Misenhimer

April 12, 1945 President Roosevelt died, do you recall hearing about that?

Mrs. Ring

Yes, while we were there we went in on a bus and we were going to stay in Washington and they said, you can't stay there. There were too many people here so we had to go on to Philadelphia and spend the weekend.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the reaction when people heard about that?

Mrs. Ring

Lots of sadness, everyone was pretty shook up about it! It was a terrible thing because they all liked Roosevelt pretty well.

Mr. Misenhimer

On May 8<sup>th</sup> of 1945 Germany surrendered.

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you hear about that?

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there any kind of celebration?

Mrs. Ring

That's when my friend was running down the hall.

Mr. Misenhimer

That was when Japan surrendered probably. In August when they first dropped the atomic bomb do you remember hearing about that?

Mrs. Ring

What year was that?

Mr. Misenhimer

August 1945

Mrs. Ring

I guess I did but I didn't know much about it then. I just remember that it happened and I knew the War would be over soon as that was dropped. I had one of my good friends that was in the Navy with me, she was married to a Sailor and he shipped aboard one of the carriers, I can't think of the name of it now, and we all comforted her when she heard the news that her husband had gone down with the ship and buried at sea I guess and course the ship sunk but I can't think of the name of which carrier it was. Then later on when I was a civilian we went on a trip to Hawaii and we were going up to Punch Bowl Crater which is a cemetery for the Military and they had a big wall of the names of those who were killed in action and buried at sea and I just happened to look up and see his name and I

thought oh my goodness so I wrote and told her that I had seen her husband's name and she said she didn't know anything about when he died, they never contacted her about anything he had done so she contacted her Congressman and they got the ball rolling and had a reunion of all of the families of the ones that were killed on the ship and so she had to make a speech. They had it down in Florida and she made a speech and she said my friend Annabel found his name and got the ball rolling so that people knew that they had their names over there and sent them pictures of it so that was kind of an interesting activity.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any actual reunions of your group?

Mrs. Ring

Other than in Chicago with all the WAVES but we didn't know any of them but our actual group that we worked with I said we need to get together but we haven't.

Mr. Misenhimer

As far as your group in a reunion?

Mrs. Ring

Yes, our close friends.

Mr. Misenhimer

I asked about souvenirs go back to that again, that's a souvenir, is that what you have here in these boxes?

Mrs. Ring

Oh yes, that's when I went through things yesterday to put these up. I have my original core book that I had to have and it's pretty yellow and then I had a newspaper explaining "the War is over in Japan and in Europe". Big headlines! I have the original letter saying we are going into the service and we have to be in Chicago at a certain time and then I get the order paper that says I have to be on the train to go to Patuxent River at a certain and be there at a certain time and I have letters and pictures that I got while I was in the Service. I wrote letters to everybody. I was a letter writer and I wrote to all my friends that were in the Service and they would write back and I saved a lot of them. Wish I could've saved all of them but some of them came back "deceased" where they were killed and there were five members in my class in Huntington College that were killed and that's about it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Annabel I want to thank you for your time today again and thank you for your service to our Country, I appreciate your time.

Mrs. Ring

Who do you think won World War II? (Laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

The ladies won it right?

Mrs. Ring

Sure! The Army and the WACS but the Marines and the Navy didn't get to go until after the War and towards the end of the War they started saying we could go to Hawaii and then I said no I'm going to go home. I don't know what year they changed that but it was after the War was over anyways. We weren't allowed to go.

Mr. Misenhimer

I see your cap over here says U.S. Navy on it.

Mrs. Ring

I got that down at the Veteran's hospital in Marion to get my medications.

Mrs. Ring

86,000 women served.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many of them were World War I?

Mrs. Ring

11,000, I was surprised at that I didn't realize there were that many.

Mr. Misenhimer

There probably a lot of Nurses there too and things.

Mrs. Ring

Yes

Mr. Misenhimer

I hadn't heard those figures.

Mrs. Ring

Yes I saw that.

Transcribed by

McKenzie Martindale

Winamac, Indiana

July 27, 2010

Oral History by

Richard Misenhimer

P.O. Box 3453

Alice, TX 78333

361-664-4071

Cell 361-701-5848