

**Interview of Mildred Blandford on her service as a secretary
in the American Red Cross during WWII**

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Dorothy Harrison: [00:02] This is Dorothy Harrison, um, interviewing Mildred Blandford (B-L-A-N-D-F-O-R-D) in Louisville, Kentucky in oOctober1983. Mildred, who presently lives in Washington, D.C., is back in Louisville for a short visit and we took the opportunity of interviewing her since she is still a member of the Louisville Unit of the Women's Overseas Service League.

Dorothy Harrison: [00:34] All right, Mildred, let's start. Um, with first your telling me what, um, branch of service you, uh, served in with the, uh, Red Cross and how long, for how long, and where? So, first of all, the branch of service?

Mildred Blandford: The Hospital Service.

Dorothy Harrison: [00:56] You were with the Hospital Service, and in what capacity?

Mildred Blandford: I was a secretary to a unit headed by an assistant field director.

Dorothy Harrison: [1:04] Very good, all right, and how long did you do this job?

Mildred Blandford: I was only in the service about 15 months, going in in August of 1944 and coming out in November of 1945.

Dorothy Harrison: [1:19] And where did you serve?

Mildred Blandford: I served in the ETO in Paris most of the time. I'm, well, in '44 when I first crossed the ocean. And then, uh, when the war was over in May over there, I went, I volunteered to go to the Pacific.

Dorothy Harrison: [1:39] Did you get there?

Mildred Blandford: Yes. [laughter]

Dorothy Harrison: [1:41] And, where did you land?

Mildred Blandford: I landed in Okinawa, finally, after 8 weeks crossing the Pacific Ocean.

Dorothy Harrison: [1:48] So you began in Europe and you ended in the Pacific. [laughter] That's quite a spread. Um, I'd like to ask a, another question. I should have perhaps asked this first. So, at this point, I will go backwards a trifle. Now, um, I'd like to ask you some information on what you did before the

1 service. In other words, given me bi-, some, some biographical
2 information about yourself.
3

4Mildred Blandford: I was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and...is that what you want?
5

6Dorothy Harrison: [2:21] Yes, yes. You were born in Louisville?
7

8Mildred Blandford: And, uh, did my ordinary schooling at, uh, I graduated from Atherton
9 High School and went 1 year to the University of Louisville and had to –
10 couldn't continue because of family reasons. And, uh, then I got a job
11 with, with a chain grocery store here in Louisville and...
12

13Dorothy Harrison; [2:50] That was Winn-Dixie, wasn't it?
14

15Mildred Blandford: ...private secretary. Yes.
16

17Dorothy Harrison: [2:52] You were a private secretary with Winn-Dixie.
18

19Mildred Blandford: Of course, I went to business school, too, before I did that.
20

21Dorothy Harrison: [2:57] Yes, I see. And had you worked for them for any length of time?
22

23Mildred Blandford: I worked for them about 10 years, I think, before the war.
24

25Dorothy Harrison: [3:06] Yes, before the war.
26

27Mildred Blandford: And, uh, tried to enlist in the, in the American Red Cross a long time
28 before I got in because of, because I was too – I didn't weigh enough.
29 [laughter]
30

31Dorothy Harrison [3:18] You didn't weigh enough?! [laughter]
32

33Mildred Blandford: I didn't weigh enough.
34

35Dorothy Harrison: [3:20] You'd have to gain some weight before you could get them to let
36 you in.
37

38Mildred Blandford: Right! They said their girls lost about 20 pounds going overseas and I lost
39 20 pounds, I would be more of a burden to them than...
40

41Dorothy Harrison: [3:32] ...than an asset. All right, that gives us a little, uh, start on, uh,
42 your, uh, background. Very well, now we'll return to the series of
43 questions, which we've been asked to, uh, ask each of our, uh, in-,

1 individuals to be interviewed. And, that is, what, uh, influenced you to
2 volunteer?
3

4Mildred Blandford: Just the sense of adventure, I suppose, and the fact that I'd worked for a
5 man who was in World War I and who had me quite interested in the
6 whole subject of going overseas and so on. He, in fact, wanted to go again
7 himself and couldn't. And, uh, besides that, I was very, very interested in
8 the war and the reasons for the war and I wanted to go.
9

10Dorothy Harrison: [4:22] Very good. All right, and, um, uh, what did you do in the service?
11 Now, you've already told us that you were in a hospital unit, uh, as a
12 secretary, but what were your specific tasks?
13

14Mildred Blandford: Well, the basic task, I guess, for a secretary was to sort of keep the books,
15 what books they were, for the unit. And also to be sure that we had the
16 supplies we needed and cigarettes and stuff like that. And then, my job
17 was to help out wherever I could, like, havi-, going around the hospital
18 wards and writing letters for the boys who wanted to, reading to them if
19 they wanted to, wanted me to, playing with them in the recreation hall,
20 cards, checkers, whatever.
21

22Dorothy Harrison: [5:13] So, it wasn't all just transcribing, uh, uh, notes and writing letters
23 for the, uh, did you do this, by the way, you said for an assistant field
24 director, uh, so your, your involvement as a secretary was in no way, uh,
25 connected with the army, uh, unit you were with?
26

27Mildred Blandford: Not at all. Not at all.
28

29Dorothy Harrison: [5:33] Not at all. By the way, what army un-, unit were you with?
30

31Mildred Blandford: We were an auxiliary. [laughter]
32

33Dorothy Harrison: [5:38] You were an auxiliary.
34

35Mildred Blandford: I was with the 194th General Hospital.
36

37Dorothy Harrison: [5:41] 194th General Hospital. And, uh, your assistant field director, uh,
38 was, can you remember what, uh, his or her name was?
39

40Mildred Blandford: Her name was Catherine Rice.
41

42Dorothy Harrison: [5:52] Catherine Rice, all right. And, um, she would, of course, have been
43 taking care of some, uh, social problems. In other words, if the men had
44 some special problem, uh...

1
2Mildred Blandford: Yes, money-wise, or family-wise, or whether they, somebody died at
3 home and they wanted leave, she had to attend to all of that.
4
5Dorothy Harrison: [6:13] That's right and, um, uh, then this was also the type of letter you
6 would have to write?
7
8Mildred Blandford: Right.
9
10Dorothy Harrison 6:19] Right. Um, very good. Now, the next question is, uh, and this sounds
11 like a circa 1970s/80s question, uh...
12
13Mildred Blandford: [laughter]
14
15Dorothy Harrison: [6:36] ...from the point of view of [inaudible 3:37] uh, yes, uh, a women's
16 movement question. Did you expect this experience to prepare you for a
17 career and did it?
18
19Mildred Blandford: No, I never expected anything. Uh, I could maybe have gotten a job at the
20 Red Cross when I came out, but I felt a need to go home. But, I never
21 expected to be anything but a temporary help in the, during the war.
22
23Dorothy Harrison: [6:59] In other words, you...Very good. Um, and, what was your pay?
24
25Mildred Blandford: I think I made about \$200 a month. I'm not positive but I know it seemed
26 like plenty then. [laughter]
27
28Dorothy Harrison: [7:18] Yes, I agree with you. I think that must have been roughly the
29 correct amount. Um, perhaps a little more, uh, I remember I was paid
30 \$1500 with the American Red Cross, uh, in 1943, and, um, I eventually
31 rose to the, to the heights of \$1800 in the 2 ½ years I was there...
32
33Mildred Blandford: That would be...I, I'm sure you made more than I did, but I thought I did.
34
35Dorothy Harrison: [7:50] About \$200?
36
37Mildred Blandford: It seemed like there was an extra bonus for going overseas... [inaudible
38 7:55]
39
40Dorothy Harrison: [7:55] ...I see. All right, here's another one of these feminist questions;
41 were you given equal opportunity for service and education?
42
43Mildred Blandford: Well, I certainly felt that I was at the time because I didn't expect
44 anything. I just went over there to do my bit, you might say.

1
2Dorothy Harrison [8:13] Right, and, uh...
3
4Mildred Blandford: And I was treated beautifully the whole time, taken care of.
5
6Dorothy Harrison: [8:17] Right. And your education was taken care of, uh, by your previous
7 experience, of course, as a secretary. And, uh, did you give any, were you
8 given any special training by the Red Cross?
9
10Mildred Blandford: Just the ordinary training for going...
11
12Dorothy Harrison: [8:34] How long?
13
14Mildred Blandford: ...for going overseas with the hospital, yes, which I had never done
15 before.
16
17Dorothy Harrison: [8:40] What, how long was that period?
18
19Mildred Blandford: Only 3 weeks in, uh, Washington.
20
21Dorothy Harrison: [8:44] In Washington, right.
22
23Mildred Blandford: The rest of it, you got on the job.
24
25Dorothy Harrison: [8:48] Exactly. [laughter] Now, what assignments were given to women?
26
27Mildred Blandford: Like, what do you mean?
28
29Dorothy Harrison: [8:55] Well, this, as I say, I believe this is an E.R.A.-era questionnaire
30 [laughter] – they seem to be terribly worried about women. Um, I think
31 what they're trying find out here is if, somehow or other, women were
32 given lowly jobs, uh, whereas the men were always given the big ones, as
33 you've just told me that...
34
35Mildred Blandford: Not at all.
36
37Dorothy Harrison: [9:15] ...as you were just telling me, uh, the, your assistant field director
38 was a woman...
39
40Mildred Blandford: We were all women in our...
41
42Dorothy Harrison: [9:22] ...group...
43
44Mildred Blandford: ...group.

1
2Dorothy Harrison: [9:23] So, there wasn't much point in, there's really not much point in
3 answering that question.
4
5Mildred Blandford: No, because the women, we were, uh, billeted with about 33 nurses.
6 Woman were kept separate from the men and all that.
7
8Dorothy Harrison: [9:37] Thank God! [laughter]
9
10Mildred Blandford: Yes. And, uh, the men looked out for us and I, I was certainly not aware of
11 any...
12
13Dorothy Harrison: [9:46] ...discrimination.
14
15Mildred Blandford: Discrimination.
16
17Dorothy Harrison: [9:49] What was the nature of your housing? You've just said that you
18 were billeted with, um, the nurses. What type of housing did you have
19 with the 194th?
20
21Mildred Blandford: Well, after we got settled, going over there and getting, before we got to
22 Paris, we just took whatever we could possibly have, and they weren't
23 always of the best, but that was nobody's fault but the war's fault.
24
25Dorothy Harrison: [10:14] Exactly. And now, you spent some time in tents?
26
27Mildred Blandford: No, uh, until I got to Pacific...
28
29Dorothy Harrison: [10:20] I see, you were in tents in the Pacific?
30
31Mildred Blandford: In Europe, we were never in tents. We were in a villa off, uh, near a little
32 spot near the [hov 10:29] for about 3 weeks during the Battle of the Bulge,
33 and we were part of, sort of cozily bedded down there. [laughter] At least,
34 the women were.
35
36Dorothy Harrison [10:40] A little crowded?
37
38Mildred Blandford: And, um, it was cold and miserable sometimes and we went without baths
39 and we kept our clothes on and all that. But, it was all adventure.
40
41Dorothy Harrison: [10:51] Exactly.
42
43Mildred Blandford: The best we could do.
44

1Dorothy Harrison: [10:53] And then when you got into final quarters, uh, where were you?
2 Outside of Paris?
3

4Mildred Blandford: When we? When we, no, we were billeted in Paris, right near the Arc de
5 Triomphe.
6

7Dorothy Harrison: [11:02] Oh good.
8

9Mildred Blandford: In a hotel called the Pennsylvania Hotel. [Rio des Cassius 11:06]. And,
10 um, went to, out to the hospital, which is, was at the Port [de Saint Cleo
11 11:13], and we went there every morning on the metro.
12

13Dorothy Harrison [11:19] And, when you say, when you say, uh, this little, uh, this nice little
14 hotel, Pennsylvania Hotel, did it have single rooms or did you, were you 2
15 in a room, or...?
16

17Mildred Blandford: I was, we were 2 in a room. I was with, uh, my friend, Catherine [Way
18 11:33], who was a staff aide.
19

20Dorothy Harrison: [11:37] I see. And, um, your room was, of course, uh, supplied, um...
21

22Mildred Blandford: We had a maid, my dear.
23

24Dorothy Harrison: [11:46] You had a maid?
25

26Mildred Blandford: We had a maid who laid out our pajamas every night. [laughter]
27

28Dorothy Harrison: [11:51] I'd say you lived in luxury! [laughter] And this, of course, this
29 housing was supplied to you free of charge?
30

31Mildred Blandford: Absolutely. As far as I know. I had nothing to do with the financial end...
32

33Dorothy Harrison: [12:00] And, with the branch – in other words, your pay was in addition
34 to, uh, the pay we've previously mentioned was in addition to housing and
35 food.
36

37Mildred Blandford: Yes.
38

39Dorothy Harrison: [12:12] And, your uniforms, I believe, were also covered.
40

41Mildred Blandford: Right.
42

43Dorothy Harrison: [12:16] So, now, what about medical care? Of course, in the middle of a
44 hospital that came free, too... [laughter]

1
2Mildred Blandford: We had doctors all around us all the time. [laughter]
3
4Dorothy Harrison: [12:22] That was very, very handy-dandy. And, what was your dress, your
5 standard dress? Was it...
6
7Mildred Blandford: Well, the regular Red Cross, sort of the oxford gray with the little blue
8 tabs and so on.
9
10Dorothy Harrison: [12:37] All right.
11
12Mildred Blandford: In the wintertime.
13
14Dorothy Harrison: [12:38] In the wintertime.
15
16Mildred Blandford: In the summertime, they were lighter blue, uh, seersucker.
17
18Dorothy Harrison: [12:44] Oh, you had the seersucker dresses?
19
20Mildred Blandford: Dresses. Mm-hm.
21
22Dorothy Harrison: [12:48] All right, now, I need to ask you what your memorable
23 experiences were. You can, uh, take it from any place you want.
24
25Mildred Blandford: Well, we did so many things. We had, we were stationed in Paris and,
26 uh...
27
28Dorothy Harrison: [13:09] Where did your men come from?
29
30Mildred Blandford: They came from the field stations first.
31
32Dorothy Harrison: [13:13] Yes.
33
34Mildred Blandford: From, and we had mostly the patients from the Battle of the Bulge, at least
35 that's what I remember the most of. And, uh, we would meet them, the
36 ambulances would come in and we would meet them at any time of the
37 day or night. We would probably know when they were coming in. We'd
38 meet them with cigarettes or donuts or whatever, depending on the degree
39 of injuries. And then, they were brought into the hospital and I remember
40 one boy in particular who came in wrapped from head to foot in bandages.
41 He'd been terribly, terribly burned and he was terribly, terribly bitter and
42 would not open up and talk or do anything or let you help him in any way.
43 And that sort of has always stayed with me as the most poignant case that
44 I came across.

1
2Dorothy Harrison: [14:08] Came, had come across, yes.
3
4Mildred Blandford: And then you had others who didn't want to write home. They didn't want
5 to tell anybody all about their misery...
6
7Dorothy Harrison: [14:16] That they were wounded.
8
9Mildred Blandford: Yes. And, uh, sometimes you had a little success and got them to write
10 home and then you felt like you had...
11
12Dorothy Harrison: [14:25] Accomplished something.
13
14Mildred Blandford: ...accomplished something.
15
16Dorothy Harrison: [14:26] Right, then, did they stay long with you at the 194th?
17
18Mildred Blandford: No, they didn't. Uh, the ambulatory ones might stay 2 or 3 weeks but the
19 very seriously injured were hustled on out of Paris to London and then to
20 the United States.
21
22Dorothy Harrison: [14:42] In other words, you were a transient facility, in effect?
23
24Mildred Blandford: Yes.
25
26Dorothy Harrison: [14:46] And those that were not so badly, uh, hurt, um, they could go back
27 to, uh, duty?
28
29Mildred Blandford: Yes, and so we entertained them as much as we could.
30
31Dorothy Harrison: [14:56] Yes.
32
33Mildred Blandford: And played games with them and so on, and some of'm, uh, felt like we
34 were people, their home, you know?
35
36Dorothy Harrison: [15:05] Yes, and I suspect there was some romances going on, there would
37 be romances...
38
39Mildred Blandford: Oh yes, definitely. [laughter] And they would almost cry when they had to
40 go back to...
41
42Dorothy Harrison: [15:15] ...to the front. And, did you have any, uh, as we would say,
43 nervous in the service, or war-weary men, uh, battle-shocked types?
44

1Mildred Blandford: Yes, but I guess we didn't see a whole lot of them.
2
3Dorothy Harrison: [15:29] I see. They were sent to a different facility?
4
5Mildred Blandford: At least I didn't because I had no training for that.
6
7Dorothy Harrison: [15:34] Yes, of course. That would be true. All right, and, um, then when
8 you got to the Pacific, um, I think you once told me something about a
9 terrific, uh, uh, typhoon you were in?
10
11Mildred Blandford: A typhoon, that's right. Two of 'em! The first one, we managed to stay in
12 our tents and, between all of us, we were about, oh, maybe 10 beds in this
13 tent, and the storm was coming from one direction and so we put all the
14 beds over on the other side, as far away as we could get from, from the
15 rain that would come in the screened top of the tent. And, we sang all
16 night long one night, singing all kinds of songs that we'd ever knew,
17 known. [laughter] And, uh, then the next time, maybe only a couple of
18 weeks later, here comes another one. So...
19
20Dorothy Harrison: [16:30] Now when was this, actually?
21
22Mildred Blandford: This was, we landed in Okinawa on the 1st of September in 1945.
23
24Dorothy Harrison: [16:36] '45, so this was, uh, a September or October typhoon?
25
26Mildred Blandford: Mostly late September, I guess. Because I do remember a few weeks of
27 peace and quiet, as far as storms are concerned. And, uh, so the next time,
28 the Seabees came and hauled us away to their, uh, what do you call
29 those...
30
31Dorothy Harrison: [17:00] Quonsets?
32
33Mildred Blandford: Quonset huts, yes. We later learned that there was more danger in those
34 Quonset huts during a tornado or a typhoon, as they call 'em over there
35 because if the top blew off...
36
37Dorothy Harrison: [17:14] You'd go blowing with it.
38
39Mildred Blandford: But they're made out of that steel or whatever they are.
40
41Dorothy Harrison: [17:19] Yeah. They'd decapitate you if you got in the way.
42
43Mildred Blandford: They would decapitate you. [laughter]
44

1Dorothy Harrison: [17:23] Well, at least they were thinking of you.
2

3Mildred Blandford: Yes. They were, they took good care of us.
4

5Dorothy Harrison: [17:28] Um, your housing then in the, in the, um, in Okinawa was in tents,
6 as you've already said, and these tents weren't canvas tents or anything
7 like that?
8

9Mildred Blandford: They had canvas tops but wooden bottoms and screened in...
10

11Dorothy Harrison: [17:42] ...sides. Was it half wood, up halfway?
12

13Mildred Blandford: Halfway, yes.
14

15Dorothy Harrison: [17:46] And then screened the rest of the way.
16

17Mildred Blandford: Yes.
18

19Dorothy Harrison: [17:48] And, um, each with [inaudible 17:50].
20

21Mildred Blandford: [inaudible 17:50] With some kind of a more permanent top, I don't
22 remember just exactly what it was, whether it was canvas or tarpaulin or
23 what.
24

25Dorothy Harrison: [17:57] Or something of that sort. And then you, were they up on stilts or,
26 uh, were they on the ground?
27

28Mildred Blandford: Yes. I think they were on stilts.
29

30Dorothy Harrison: [18:05] I keep remembering that they used to put things up...
31

32Mildred Blandford: I've got some pictures somewhere but [laughter] I don't know where they
33 are.
34

35Dorothy Harrison: [18:11] Yes. Well, at any rate, um, it was not quite the same as the little
36 h-, h-, little hotel in Paris with the maid service. [laughter]
37

38Mildred Blandford: No, it wasn't. It wasn't.
39

40Dorothy Harrison: [18:20] All right, um, we'll get back then to the list of questions.
41

42Mildred Blandford: And, actually, well, you might be interested to hear this. After 6 weeks of
43 this, 2 typhoons, General Stillwell ordered all the women off the island to
44 go home.

1
2Dorothy Harrison: [18:38] Oh, he did?
3
4Mildred Blandford: So, we came home.
5
6Dorothy Harrison: [18:42] Very interesting. I had no idea that he decided that was too much.
7
8Mildred Blandford: I could have stayed but, by this time, I was soaked out. All my clothes
9 were in ruins [laughter] and I thought it was best to go home with the rest
10 of the women.
11
12Dorothy Harrison: [18:55] With the women, and what was the date at this point?
13
14Mildred Blandford: This is about the middle of October 1945.
15
16Dorothy Harrison: [19:01] 1945. Well, the war was over.
17
18Mildred Blandford: Yes.
19
20Dorothy Harrison: [19:05] And, so, he, I'm sure General Stillwell thought there was not
21 much point in continuing to keep you there. Very well, we'll go on with
22 the questions. Um...
23
24Mildred Blandford: We had also, um, welcomed back some Japanese prisoners American-
25 Japanese prisoners.
26
27Dorothy Harrison: [19:21] Oh, you did!
28
29Mildred Blandford: On Okinawa. Yes, with coffee and donuts. [laughter]
30
31Dorothy Harrison: [19:25] Were you, what state, what condition were they in?
32
33Mildred Blandford: Well, um, more or less normal. They seemed in pretty good shape, the
34 ones I saw.
35
36Dorothy Harrison: [19:33] You saw, yes. Um, then they were going on to Okinawa, back to
37 the United States. Flown or shipped?
38
39Mildred Blandford: I expect they were gonna be shipped.
40
41Dorothy Harrison: [19:44] Shipped, shipped. Yes, probably. Um, now, this next question, can
42 you compare service careers then with present?
43
44Mildred Blandford: Not really, I can't, because I don't know anything about the present.

1
2Dorothy Harrison: [19:59] Very good. 13, did you experience conflict between being
3 feminine and being a military professional? Since you weren't a military
4 professional, [laughter] that seems a totally beside-the-point question,
5 doesn't it?
6
7Mildred Blandford: Well, I think there were some, maybe, some officers who had some kind
8 of an objection to women being over there but not to any...
9
10Dorothy Harrison: [20:23] ...great extent.
11
12Mildred Blandford: ...great extent.
13
14Dorothy Harrison: [20:25] And, certainly, you didn't have any trouble being feminine, did
15 you? [laughter]
16
17Mildred Blandford: No. [laughter]
18
19Dorothy Harrison: [20:30] Um, 14, uh, did you use benefits of the GI Bill?
20
21Mildred Blandford: No. We were no entitled to that under the Red Cross.
22
23Dorothy Harrison: [20:40] No, of course you weren't. It was, the American Red Cross was
24 totally volun-, voluntary.
25
26Mildred Blandford: Yes.
27
28Dorothy Harrison: [20:49] Uh, what demands demanded the greatest adjustment for you, um,
29 in getting used to your, your overseas experience? Uh, uniforms, or living
30 with others, or regulations, or lack of freedom, or the terminology that
31 was...
32
33Mildred Blandford: Well, I sort of enjoyed the whole thing. I supposed maybe the hardest
34 thing to do was to live with a, such a great big group of women.
35
36Dorothy Harrison: [21:14] Yes.
37
38Mildred Blandford: And taking showers together and so on, you know.
39
40Dorothy Harrison: [21:19] The lack of privacy.
41
42Mildred Blandford: Yes.
43

1Dorothy Harrison: [21:23] Uh, what was the, what was the most unpopular regulation that
2 you, that you met? Were there any? Uh, were you confined to quarters for
3 any reason after a certain hour or anything like that?
4

5Mildred Blandford: Not that I remember. The whole thing was a, just a big experience for me
6 and I enjoyed it.
7

8Dorothy Harrison: [21:45] Um, and, uh, what did you, what have you done after your, your
9 service?
10

11Mildred Blandford: Well, I came home. Actually, my mother expected me home, needed me
12 home, and I came home and went back to my same job I'd had before and
13 continued on and became an office manager for the company.
14

15Dorothy Harrison: [22:09] It's a Winn-Dixie, wasn't it?
16

17Mildred Blandford: Yes.
18

19Dorothy Harrison: [22:10] Yes.
20

21Mildred Blandford: And went down to Montgomery, Alabama and stayed a couple of years
22 with them. And finally came back to Louisville again because of my
23 mother's health, and then she died and I, having had a long-time dream of
24 going back to Europe, I went back and stayed for 6 years in Paris and I
25 loved it.
26

27Dorothy Harrison: [22:34] I think, I think that's so, such an interesting part of your, of your
28 life and, uh, what did you do over in, in Paris?
29

30Mildred Blandford: Well, I first went back to my first love, which was Paris, and, uh, the first
31 thing I did was go to the American Embassy and see if there was any
32 possibility of getting a job. And, they told me no, that the Americans
33 living in Paris were not eligible for a job with the American Embassy, that
34 if they gave jobs to anyone over there, they must give'm to French people.
35 So, I, they, they sent me over to the Chamber of Commerce and I went
36 over there and met a delightful French woman, American woman, I think,
37 who was born in Paris. Anyway, do you want me to go into all that?
38

39Dorothy Harrison: [23:27] Well, it doesn't, just as long as we find out how you ended.
40

41Mildred Blandford: Yes. Uh, but, so I wanted to say I went to school.
42

43Dorothy Harrison: [23:38] Yes.
44

1Mildred Blandford: I went to the Alliance Française and worked for a year and a half. All the
2 time having been promised finally that I might get a job at the Embassy
3 and finally, after a year and a half about, I got a job with, they called me in
4 and gave me a job with the CIA...
5

6Dorothy Harrison: [23:59] All right, now that...
7

8Mildred Blandford: ...which had an office across from the American Embassy.
9

10Dorothy Harrison: [24:03] Embassy, in other words, although they had said they needed to
11 give you a, you know, that they would give the job to the French, in this
12 case, they [laughter] they, they didn't want, uh, this CIA job...
13

14Mildred Blandford: They couldn't have [inaudible 24:13]. That's right. They couldn't use a
15 French person...
16

17Dorothy Harrison: [24:16] Person in this position. And, um, I suspect also they, they, when
18 you had first arrived in Paris, your French was not in such good condition.
19

20Mildred Blandford: Not very good at all, no. So, I worked with them for about a year in Paris
21 and, at that time, uh, Mr. De Gaulle wanted us to get out of Paris. We were
22 under the NATO organization and...
23

24Dorothy Harrison: [24:45] So the job was through the Embassy, not – in other words, you
25 worked for the CIA, but you got the job through the Embassy.
26

27Mildred Blandford: Right.
28

29Dorothy Harrison: [24:53] And, it was the CIA that was in NATO.
30

31Mildred Blandford: That's right.
32

33Dorothy Harrison: [24:56] Or under the...
34

35Mildred Blandford: It was connected with NATO.
36

37Dorothy Harrison: [24:58] con-, NATO, right.
38

39Mildred Blandford: And, uh, so we were requested to move our office out of Paris. So, my
40 boss decided he wanted to go to London and I went to London with him. I
41 worked there for 3 ½ years until Mr. Nixon called all the extra help that
42 [laughter] had been hired in Paris and London to come home and I came
43 home again.
44

1Dorothy Harrison: [25:25] You came home again.
2
3Mildred Blandford: After 6 years.
4
5Dorothy Harrison: [25:26] And you, you were a secretary in the CIA?
6
7Mildred Blandford: A secretary and, um, a receptionist.
8
9Dorothy Harrison: [25:34] Receptionist, yes. All right.
10
11Mildred Blandford: Again, an odds-and-ends kind of job.
12
13Dorothy Harrison: [25:37] ...job, yes. All right, fine. And then, um, did you retire at once?
14
15Mildred Blandford: Well, yes.
16
17Dorothy Harrison: [25:45] Yes, at that point.
18
19Mildred Blandford: From any formal work.
20
21Dorothy Harrison: [25:48] And I, yes, and I know that you came back to Louisville and that
22 you stayed with us a number of years and then decided to go and live in
23 Washington, which was near the closest relatives that you had, your sister
24 and, uh, so we lost you.
25
26Mildred Blandford: [laughter] Not entirely.
27
28Dorothy Harrison: [26:5] No, not entirely. Now, before we conclude this interview, Mildred,
29 um, I would like you to tell that little story, uh, about your experiences in
30 the, uh, school in Washington, D.C., when you were preparing to go
31 overseas. I recall that, um, it was, uh, it was, uh, it interested me because
32 I'm a northerner and you're from the south and, uh, it shows that certainly
33 there was no unanimity of, of, uh, feeling, uh, in the south on an, a very
34 important question and I should have thought of this when we were talking
35 about your 3 weeks of training in Washington, but I didn't so now will
36 you tell that little story again?
37
38Mildred Blandford: Well, I think what you're talking about, Dorothy, is, uh, the class of
39 people looking for the job with the Red Cross during, before we went, we
40 were sent overseas. There was a classroom with a woman who conducted
41 it and so on who was asking us questions, just general questions and so on,
42 and she happened to ask, uh, if, if we knew if after we got overseas and we
43 were at a dance being given for the, uh, soldiers if a black soldier asked us
44 to dance, what would we do? And I was a little bit shocked by the fact that

1 there was silence while I supposed everybody was thinking about what
2 they, what they would do. And I knew immediately what she wanted to
3 hear, and I put up my hand and said, "Well, I would dance with him, of
4 course." And, she wrote something down on a little piece of paper and
5 almost but, within the next few days, my name was called to go out with
6 194th General Hospital. [laughter]
7
8Dorothy Harrison: [28:13] Good!
9
10Mildred Blandford: That started it all! [laughter]
11
12Dorothy Harrison: [28:16] Well, I, I, uh, I like that story. I, of course, I have, since I've lived
13 in Louisville now for, for 30 years, I realize this is a city, which is
14 certainly not deep south in its antagonisms and, uh, and in its intolerances,
15 it's a very, actually a very cosmopolitan and, uh, liberal city.
16
17Mildred Blandford: I always thought so.
18
19Dorothy Harrison: [28:42] Right. And, I have grown to love the city very much. So that, um,
20 I'm always happy to, to be able to say that I have respected, uh, this place
21 and its people. Well, thank you very much, Mildred, for the interview and
22 we'll hope that this serves some historical purpose at some future date.
23
24Mildred Blandford: Thank you. I enjoyed it.
25
26
27/ab