

**Interview of Virginia Immerman on her service in the  
Women's Army Air Corps during WWII**

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Virginia Emrich: This is Virginia Emrich of Louisville, Kentucky Unit of Women's Overseas Service League on March 23, 1984. I am going to interview Virginia Immerman who was in the WAAC Army Corps in World War II. [0:23] Virginia, tell me something about what you were doing before you entered the service and why you entered it?

Virginia Immerman: Um, I was living in a small town where I grew up outside of Boston, Massachusetts, and I had graduated from high school and eventually went to business college, and I was working as a secretary at the American Unitarian Association. As the, uh, war went on, they started to draft married men, and life at home became rather boring and lonesome. I decided that I would join the service. I was given the choice of what branch I was to serve in, and I chose the air force, which at that time was part of the army. I was sent to Fort Oglethorpe in Chattanooga, Tennessee for basic training, and from there I was shipped to Love Field in Dallas, Texas. This was my first, uh, experience of traveling outside of New England and to meeting, uh, girls, women from, um, especially the South or other parts of the country. Um, I worked at Love Field for a very short time in the Adjutant General's Office. I kept wanting to go overseas. When I saw a requisition for women to fill overseas contingents, I would ask a person I knew in personnel to try to get me on the list. I finally managed to be put on a shipment. I left Dallas with one other girl, Mildred [Rainey 2:29] from Overland, Missouri, with a delay on route to visit my family in mas-, in Boston before leaving for overseas.

Our group came from all over the United States to Grenier Field in mas-, Manchester, New Hampshire. The only other girl I knew was one from Boston who had taken the entrance physical in Boston when I did. By the time we were ready to ship out, I knew the name of every girl, had been listening to their names and see-, seeing them be handed their mail at mail call every day. There were approximately 150 girls in our company. It was part of the Air Transport Command. While we were at Grenier Field, we made trips into town to stock up on cosmetics, and all who needed to made a trip to the post beauty parlor for a permanent since we had no idea that we would be able to do this where we were going. We were not told where we were going, and there was a certain amount of, uh, trepidation about what it would be like there. When we finally were loaded on the train in Manchester, we knew we were heading for Florida. I had never been to the real South. We were a troop train and went on a very roundabout route. The train was our home for several days and nights, and

the girls sang with the porters to while the time away. "Chattanooga Choo Choo" was the favorite song.

I remember getting off the train one night for a brief stopover and walking down to see the Mississippi River for the first time. We saw the dark shacks in which black people lived and which we had only seen in pictures. We got the n-, of the train in North Carolina for breakfast in a restaurant with immaculate white tablecloths and charming black waiters serving coffee from silver pots. I felt I was in the South for the first time. Finally we came in to hanging-moss country. I remember how thrilling it was to look out the window and see the moss hanging just as I had pictured it to be. We were l-, offloaded at some backwater place outside of Miami. I remember our consternation when we were expected to heave our heavy baggage into the trucks. The bags were really packed tightly. We had jumped up and down on each layer to get everything in, and they were very heavy. Our training had not been very rigorous, but somehow we got loaded up and were taken to a Spanish-style hotel, the f-, Floridian on Biscayne Bay. We shared that hotel with officers and various civilians waiting to go overseas. Down the street, the enlisted men were billeted at another big hotel, The Fleetwood.

Uh, finally, uh, I was put on alert, which meant that I could not leave the hotel grounds. We, uh, stopped off in Puerto Rico at Borinquen Field. We still did not know where we were going. We made short stops in Georgetown and in Belem in South America, and we did see some freight marked Karachi on our plane. Somewhere the rumor had started that we were going to Africa. Our next stop was Natal where many of the girls were still waiting to be shipped out, but I was shipped out the very next day after I arrived. We had to stop on Ascension Island, which was rather scary because they had a saying – miss Ascension and your wife gets a pension. Indeed, several planes coming and going had crashed there. We were very hospitably received on the base in Accra. It was very hot there and except for the rainy season, which we had missed, the sun shone all the time. Our buildings where we worked and lived were thick concrete blocks and were fairly comfortable.

Uh, let me ask you this. [7:37] Did you have to have any special shots or anything for your being located in Africa? What did you have to do as Preventive? Eh, s-... Can you – yes, just tell me.

Eh, uh, we had to take Atabrine tablets.

[7:56] Oh, is that all? Well.

1 Virginia Immerman: We had regular shots I'm sure before we left.  
2  
3 Virginia Emrich: Hm. Uh-huh. I see.  
4  
5 Virginia Immerman: But we had to take Atabrine tablets. We also were, uh...  
6  
7 Virginia Emrich: Atabrine.  
8  
9 Virginia Immerman: ...able to take salt tablets too, which did help.  
10  
11 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
12  
13 Virginia Immerman: One time I thought if one was good, two was better, and I got very sick.  
14 [chuckle] We didn't...  
15  
16 Virginia Emrich: Hm.  
17  
18 Virginia Immerman: ...really know how to handle those. But, uh, eh, that was the one thing,  
19 was the Atabrine tablets and wearing – at night we had to wear leggings,  
20 which were very ugly, but you could not go out without them.  
21  
22 Virginia Emrich: [8:32] Because of mosquitos?  
23  
24 Virginia Immerman: Because of mosquitos.  
25  
26 Virginia Emrich: I see. Well, I know practically every area had a different, uh, set up of a  
27 shots or some, uh...  
28  
29 Virginia Immerman: Mm-hm.  
30  
31 Virginia Emrich: ...preparation for it, and I just wondered in your case. Alright.  
32  
33 Virginia Immerman: I was assigned to work in the, uh, Quartermaster Office, I remember the  
34 first day going to the office where I was to work, seeing a native man  
35 striding along with a typewriter on his head. We had a native young man  
36 who did typing in our office. He used to come in and warm up just like a  
37 concert pianist. He also used to bring in...  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 9:09].  
40  
41 Virginia Immerman: ...raw diamonds.  
42  
43 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
44

1 Virginia Immerman: And people would buy them.  
2  
3 Virginia Emrich: Well. [Inaudible 9:17] African diamonds [inaudible 9:18].  
4  
5 Virginia Immerman: And for snacks, we had t-, freshly roasted peanuts and bananas, which  
6 grew there.  
7  
8 Virginia Emrich: Homegrown. [chuckle] [9:28] What about your, uh, laundry facilities and  
9 other things that you needed?  
10  
11 Virginia Immerman: Life was very, uh, very, um, good there. We had laundry, no limit to how  
12 much you could send, which was a great thing. Of course, it would have to  
13 be that way because of the heat. We had, uh, native, uh, men who served  
14 as waiters in mess hall, and we had native girls who did our chores in the  
15 rooms.  
16  
17 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 10:11].  
18  
19 Virginia Immerman: So we had no KP or that kind of duty.  
20  
21 Virginia Emrich: [10:06] Did you have to supply any of the, uh, laundry fac-, uh, uh,  
22 implements, for instance your soaps and such things as that, or was this  
23 something that the army took care of for our WAACs [inaudible 10:19]?  
24  
25 Virginia Immerman: I don't remember them, uh, uh, that we had to supply anything.  
26  
27 Virginia Emrich: Well different services had different ways of doing things.  
28  
29 Virginia Immerman: We even eventually had a beauty parlor there.  
30  
31 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
32  
33 Virginia Immerman: After we got there, they sent to, uh, a beautician, and we had our own  
34 beauty parlor.  
35  
36 Virginia Emrich: Uh, na-, native or a member of the, of the WAAC?  
37  
38 Virginia Immerman: No, ame-, American, a member of the WAAC.  
39  
40 Virginia Emrich: I see. Well you were lucky in that.  
41  
42 Virginia Immerman: Yes.  
43  
44 Virginia Emrich: Hm. Alright. [Inaudible 10:42].

1  
2Virginia Immerman: Yeah, Air Transport Command always went first class.  
3  
4Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
5  
6Virginia Immerman: They were sometimes called the army of terrified civilians or allergic to  
7 combat, but they really did have, uh, very good facilities. And we, uh, we  
8 were different from the other, uh, services.  
9  
10Virginia Emrich: I see. I'm getting the picture now.  
11  
12 [laughter]  
13  
14Virginia Immerman: We were there with the British and, uh, they r-, used to – we had a moving  
15 picture, outdoor moving picture theater, and they used to come there, and,  
16 uh, we sometimes did things with the British. The WAACs were very  
17 popular, uh, in the town with the native people.  
18  
19Virginia Emrich: [11:30] Alright, when you say, say you were with the British, do you mean  
20 people – civilians are the br-, the army, the military British?  
21  
22Virginia Immerman: Well they had civilians in town because it was then British West Africa,  
23 but they also had military people there. They were not on our base, but  
24 they used to come in trucks to our movies and so forth.  
25  
26Virginia Emrich: I see, so...  
27  
28Virginia Immerman: So they could use some of our facilities.  
29  
30Virginia Emrich: [11:55] Did you have many social occasions that you were with them?  
31  
32Virginia Immerman: No, no, we didn't.  
33  
34Virginia Emrich: I see.  
35  
36Virginia Immerman: We only had 150 women, and there were goodness knows how many  
37 American soldiers, and there weren't enough...  
38  
39Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 12:09] come first.  
40  
41Virginia Immerman: ...women to go around. [laughter]  
42  
43Virginia Emrich: Right.  
44

1 Virginia Immerman: As far as social, uh, affairs were concerned.  
2  
3 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh. I see.  
4  
5 Virginia Immerman: Yeah.  
6  
7 Virginia Emrich: Alright.  
8  
9 Virginia Immerman: We had a, a PX where there were – there was music and dancing, and, uh,  
10 they served Accra beer until American beer – I remember it was during  
11 the war that they, uh, made it legal.  
12  
13 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 12:32].  
14  
15 Virginia Immerman: And, uh, there was an Officers Club there, but of course the enlisted  
16 women were not allowed to, uh, mingle with officers, but they let us have  
17 the club once a month for a big dance where the enlisted men and the  
18 women went.  
19  
20 Virginia Emrich: Hm.  
21  
22 Virginia Immerman: As a matter of fact, we had w-, 2 dances where we wore formal dresses  
23 until they – someone...  
24  
25 Virginia Emrich: [12:57] And how did you get those formal dresses? [laughter]  
26  
27 Virginia Immerman: Okay. Some of them were, uh, made by native women in town. My – one  
28 of my best friends had a beautiful lace dress made by a native. Well, I  
29 think she was maybe French, a Fr-, there were a few French people. Some  
30 of them sent home for their dresses. My dress was made there by a  
31 WAAC. I had a, a flowered skirt, and I had a white blouse that she made,  
32 and I wore native sandals that were made out of old, um, automobile tires,  
33 but they looked very nice. You know, they were, eh, they were painted...  
34  
35 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
36  
37 Virginia Immerman: ...and they were very attractive.  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: Yeah, [well 13:39].  
40  
41 Virginia Immerman: And it was a better kind of outfit to wear because it was so hot. Some of  
42 those chiffon dresses just did not stand up in that terrible heat, and I was  
43 very comfortable.  
44

1 Virginia Emrich: [13:51] While we're on the subject of clothes, uh, how regulated were you  
2 for uniform during the day? Was it strict?  
3

4 Virginia Immerman: We had t-, we had strict uniform regulations. The men there, eh, quite  
5 often wore shorts with knee socks, and we wore, um, skirts and tops with,  
6 uh, boots. They were high boots.  
7

8 Virginia Emrich: I see. [14:16] Did you wear pants at any time in the military?  
9

10 Virginia Immerman: We were never issued pants. Evidently the army was short of money or it  
11 was, you know, right at the time when the war effort was going full blast,  
12 and there were shortages, and we never were issued pants. Some of the  
13 girls bought men's pants in the PX. I never did. But it would have been  
14 nice if we had them. Then, then you wouldn't have to wear those pup tents.  
15 [laughter] But I think – I didn't mind what we wore because of the good  
16 laundry service. I had a clean uniform every day.  
17

18 Virginia Emrich: Hm.  
19

20 Virginia Immerman: We did have to have, uh, mosquito nettings over our bed...  
21

22 Virginia Emrich: Oh, yeah.  
23

24 Virginia Immerman: ...and whether it made it hotter or not, I don't know, but it certainly made  
25 you think it was.  
26

27 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
28

29 Virginia Immerman: And some of the girls would try to get away with not having them down,  
30 but it was considered an offense and you were punished if you were  
31 caught.  
32

33 Virginia Emrich: [15:13] Did you have any, any, uh, fever or anything that, uh, anybody in  
34 the company might have gotten because of mosquitos?  
35

36 Virginia Immerman: Not that I know of. The only thing that we got and I got a, a touch of it,  
37 but it g-, I, I lost it as soon as I went North was what they used to call  
38 jungle rot. It was some sort of a, uh, an infection that you got on your  
39 hands and feet, and it was – could get very ugly. And I guess it got in  
40 some people's ears, and I heard later that some of the girls actually had to  
41 go home and go to the hospital. And, uh, mine went away as soon as I got  
42 to England.  
43

1 Virginia Emrich: Well. Oh, that's interesting. [15:56] Alright, did I interrupt you there  
2 [inaudible 15:58]?  
3  
4 Virginia Immerman: Well I don't remember what we were saying. [chuckle] Uh...  
5  
6 Virginia Emrich: [16:03] Is there a place, eh, among your notes that you might pick up?  
7  
8 Virginia Immerman: Well, uh, we did work hard every day, but we had very good food, except  
9 that we lacked milk and butter. We didn't have any milk and butter. Uh,  
10 some of the people would go into town and eat, but I never [throat  
11 clearing] ate in there because – the town was very interesting, but it  
12 smelled very bad.  
13  
14 Virginia Emrich: [16:33] Did you use, uh, your American money or did you have an issue  
15 special for...  
16  
17 Virginia Immerman: No.  
18  
19 Virginia Emrich: ...Africa?  
20  
21 Virginia Immerman: We used – I don't remember. We e-, I think we used the, uh, British West  
22 African money, which was like the British money.  
23  
24 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
25  
26 Virginia Immerman: That's right.  
27  
28 Virginia Emrich: I see.  
29  
30 Virginia Immerman: Yes, we didn't use American money. I'd forgotten about that. Uh, we had  
31 a beautiful beach there. It was very heavy surf, and you didn't swim in it.  
32 Uh, the native people were guards because the surf was so rough they  
33 were able to swim in it, but most of the Americans couldn't handle it. Uh,  
34 we were not allowed to, uh, stray very far from the limits set for us. One  
35 day a friend and I went on a picnic that was beyond the limits. There were  
36 2 men from Standard Oil or something who took – they were young men,  
37 who took us on a picnic. They lived in town. And we, uh, brought the  
38 dishes after the picnic down to the ocean to wash, and every single dish  
39 was washed away.  
40  
41 Virginia Emrich: [laughter]  
42  
43 Virginia Immerman: That's how rough the sea was.  
44

1 Virginia Emrich: Oh. Yeah.  
2  
3 Virginia Immerman: And I remember seeing a little boy there, and he must have had  
4 elephantiasis because he had one of his huge toe, you know, just huge.  
5  
6 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
7  
8 Virginia Immerman: So he must have. The natives – you see we were not really supposed to be  
9 there – were very friendly though, and one of them or two of them or  
10 several of them, they had canoes that they made themselves, and they took  
11 us out beyond the surf in these canoes for nothing.  
12  
13 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
14  
15 Virginia Immerman: Just that we would take their picture. They were so...  
16  
17 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 18:14].  
18  
19 Virginia Immerman: ...and they really liked us...  
20  
21 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
22  
23 Virginia Immerman: ...you know.  
24  
25 Virginia Emrich: Well.  
26  
27 Virginia Immerman: And most of the, uh, [throat clearing] girls after they were in Accra for a  
28 short time were – went with steady with young men. Uh...  
29  
30 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
31  
32 Virginia Immerman: ...there were choices all over the place, but I think it's rather interesting  
33 that most of them settled on one person, [you know 18:39].  
34  
35 Virginia Emrich: Yes.  
36  
37 Virginia Immerman: We had 2 weddings in full regalia there at the base and...  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: [18:46] And h-, how did they get all the, the...  
40  
41 Virginia Immerman: Well...  
42  
43 Virginia Emrich: ...[inaudible 18:48]?  
44

1 Virginia Immerman: ...one of, eh, eh, one of the girls, um, her dress was made by another  
2 WAAC, and it was a beautiful...  
3  
4 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
5  
6 Virginia Immerman: ...white lace dress.  
7  
8 Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
9  
10 Virginia Immerman: And it was a, it was a very nice wedding in the chapel. I remember I, uh,  
11 was supposed to have a date that night, and I went to the wedding and the  
12 young man came, and I wasn't there. I had just gone, you know, on the  
13 spur of the moment.  
14  
15 Virginia Emrich: Oh, yeah.  
16  
17 Virginia Immerman: She was [an old 19:11] friend of mine. I don't know what the other girl  
18 wore. But there ways of getting things.  
19  
20 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
21  
22 Virginia Immerman: There people who could sew in town, and then you could send for things.  
23  
24 Virginia Emrich: [stuttering] [12:20] Well, what happened to the couple after they were  
25 married? Were they separated and sent back to their [different 19:26]  
26 separate units or were they still close to each other?  
27  
28 Virginia Immerman: Well one of the couples, they were both stationed there. Uh, the other  
29 couple, I think he was sent back. We had one girl in our group who was  
30 married, and they eventually – her husband was in the Air Transport  
31 Command, too, at one of the line stations up further toward – in the desert,  
32 and they sent him to our base, so that...  
33  
34 Virginia Emrich: [19:53] Could they live together?  
35  
36 Virginia Immerman: They – I don't think they could live together, but they did send them to t-,  
37 the base because they were married. I don't know what they did, really.  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
40  
41 Virginia Immerman: And, unfortunately, she was one of the girls who was crashed...  
42  
43 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
44

1 Virginia Immerman: ...in the plane. Her name was Frieda Friend.  
2  
3 Virginia Emrich: Oh, yeah, that was a tragedy.  
4  
5 Virginia Immerman: Yeah. After, uh, VE-Day, work at the base began to wind down. It, it had  
6 really been built up to bring the big planes back from China Burma India.  
7 That is probably why we were brought in too. You know, they built it up.  
8 And then as they were coming back, it was winding down, and the  
9 WAACs were given a choice. They could go back to the states or go to  
10 headquarters in London.  
11  
12 Virginia Emrich: [20:47] And where did you ask to go?  
13  
14 Virginia Immerman: I chose to go on. We were sent out in groups, and I was on one of the first  
15 flights, and we went to London first. That's where the headquarters were.  
16 We were – some of the girls were in – not in headquarters, but I was  
17 always in headquarters, and, uh, we were sent to, uh, first we went to  
18 Bovington, which is the old 8th Air Force Base, and that was an  
19 experience for us because there were no amenities there. [chuckle] Oh, we  
20 had to ask our, eh, eh, the highest ranking sergeant for toilet paper, and she  
21 had to measure it out, and it was very cold. We actually slept in our boots  
22 and hats the first night. Eh, it was...  
23  
24 Virginia Emrich: Oh, my.  
25  
26 Virginia Immerman: ...it was not too pleasant there. We weren't there very long. The only  
27 recreation, you could go off through the fields, which were typical English  
28 fields. You crossed over a stile, and there was a bull in the field, to a  
29 public that was – let's see, I, I – probably several miles away, so if you  
30 liked to drink beer. But that was the only thing going at that base at that  
31 time. So we were glad when they sent – shipped us into London. And I  
32 was, uh, sent – you were sent to personnel, and you really got a choice of  
33 jobs, and they had a choice of you. And, uh, I took a job in the Special  
34 Projects Office.  
35  
36 Virginia Emrich: [22:11] What is the Special Projects?  
37  
38 Virginia Immerman: Well, the Special Projects can be various things. At one time, uh, they  
39 handled, for instance, they were sh-, um, doing secret dropping of  
40 equipment into the Scandinavian countries. I think there was a man  
41 named, uh, he was a, an air force pilot named [Inaudible 22:33] who was  
42 in charge of that, and he, he was – did it through that office. Now he was  
43 long gone after, you know, when I got there. This was during the war.

1 They did all sorts of special things. And, uh, when I got – by the time I got  
2 there, the – as the war was, you know, uh, VE-Day...  
3  
4 Virginia Emrich: Officially over.  
5  
6 Virginia Immerman: ...had finished in Europe. The Japanese war was still going on, but in  
7 Europe, what they were doing, the Air Transport w-, Command was going  
8 to all the air bases, and I'm sure that probably we were giving the countries  
9 equipment to enlarge the air bases, and, uh, for instance when I got to Orly  
10 Field, it was nothing, and now it is a big base. And they would survey the  
11 fields and report back to the United States what was available there and  
12 what was needed and, and, uh, most of my work was typing up the reports  
13 that the various field people who visited all the bases in Holland and all  
14 over Europe [inaudible 23:43].  
15  
16 Virginia Emrich: [23:43] Are y-, are you saying that the American military left, uh, supplies  
17 and left machinery perhaps or left things to make a bigger field, a more  
18 efficient running organization, eh, for the country.  
19  
20 Virginia Immerman: I have a feeling...  
21  
22 Virginia Emrich: [Yeah 23:59].  
23  
24 Virginia Immerman: ...that they were doing that. Yes.  
25  
26 Virginia Emrich: Oh, yeah, yeah.  
27  
28 Virginia Immerman: I really – you know, it's pretty hard to remember...  
29  
30 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
31  
32 Virginia Immerman: ...uh, exactly what was happening. I know they were surveying the field  
33 saying what was needed...  
34  
35 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
36  
37 Virginia Immerman: ...and what was already there.  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: [24:15] Uh, but this was for use after the mil-, American military had left?  
40 Is that correct?  
41  
42 Virginia Immerman: This was after VE-Day.  
43  
44 Virginia Emrich: Oh.

1  
2Virginia Immerman: Now there, there were still military in Europe.  
3  
4Virginia Emrich: [24:25] But, but I mean they weren't preparing, uh, the field or whatever  
5 the location was for the situation.  
6  
7Virginia Immerman: Not for war.  
8  
9Virginia Emrich: Well, or not...  
10  
11Virginia Immerman: They were preparing for peace.  
12  
13Virginia Emrich: Eh, for peace. [24:37] Do you suppose, uh, they had in mind the  
14 occupation army or America?  
15  
16Virginia Immerman: I think so. Partly it was occupation because...  
17  
18Virginia Emrich: Oh, I see.  
19  
20Virginia Immerman: ...there was an occupation army there.  
21  
22Virginia Emrich: I see.  
23  
24Virginia Immerman: It was, uh, looking toward the future. I'm sure it was coordinated with all  
25 sorts of things, probably the Marshall Plan and everything...  
26  
27Virginia Emrich: I see.  
28  
29Virginia Immerman: ...because they – the, the air, uh, fields did need to be re-...  
30  
31Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
32  
33Virginia Immerman: ...you know, conditioned and so forth...  
34  
35Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
36  
37Virginia Immerman: ...and improved.  
38  
39Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
40  
41Virginia Immerman: And that was, uh, part of it also was what the Russians were doing in these  
42 various places. The, um, people out in the field would come in and dictate  
43 these reports, which I would type. And they were trying to soft-pedal the  
44 fact that there were beginning to be, um, differences between the Russians

1 and the Americans, and, uh, there were beginning to be suspensions and so  
2 forth. And some of these things came out in the reports. But it always  
3 seemed to me that they were trying not to really spell it out, that they were  
4 hinting at it more than anything else, but there were signs that there was  
5 animosity and things going on.  
6  
7Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
8  
9Virginia Immerman: [Inaudible 25:57].  
10  
11Virginia Emrich: It's very interesting. Yes. [26:00] I wondered, uh, eh, eh, the Marshall Plan  
12 was something I had in mind, but I didn't know it had actually started that  
13 early, immediately after VE-Day? I thought it was [inaudible 26:10] put  
14 into effect [inaudible 26:12]...  
15  
16Virginia Immerman: Well I don't know w-, whether it was in effect, but I'm sure the...  
17  
18Virginia Emrich: ...[inaudible 26:13].  
19  
20Virginia Immerman: ...the preplanning...  
21  
22Virginia Emrich: Yes. Yes.  
23  
24Virginia Immerman: ...was probably.  
25  
26Virginia Emrich: Yes.  
27  
28Virginia Immerman: I'm sure right away they knew they were going to have to do something.  
29  
30Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm. Yes.  
31  
32Virginia Immerman: Just as like they had to do something for the people who were in the  
33 camps and for the people who were – food and so forth. I'm sure they were  
34 doing things like that.  
35  
36Virginia Emrich: [26:30] So, so you're saying that, that a, a good side, it wasn't Americans  
37 didn't, uh, just walk out and leave a place that they had taken over totally  
38 at a loss for the people who were native to that area? They did try to do  
39 something for them to [inaudible 26:47]?  
40  
41Virginia Immerman: Well I don't know what...  
42  
43Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
44

1 Virginia Immerman: ...their reasons were...  
2  
3 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
4  
5 Virginia Immerman: ...but they were – I'll tell you, I was not as politically aware then.  
6  
7 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
8  
9 Virginia Immerman: I had not been to college. I was young then, um, and I was, uh, more  
10 interested in, you know, life and what was happening...  
11  
12 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 27:04]. Sure.  
13  
14 Virginia Immerman: ...around me.  
15  
16 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
17  
18 Virginia Immerman: And I really was not politically aware.  
19  
20 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
21  
22 Virginia Immerman: So that is probably one of the reasons why I can't tell you exactly what  
23 was happening. Now if I were working in the office, I'd really know. We  
24 also had the French liaison officer in our office, in our office in Paris. He  
25 was one of the [Inaudible 27:22], as he told me, he was one of the poorer  
26 ones, and I remember – I hate to tell you this. I remember one of his jobs  
27 was to get Simone Simon to come to the, uh, March of Dimes Ball. That  
28 was one of his assignments.  
29  
30 Virginia Emrich: Well...  
31  
32 Virginia Immerman: I never could tell what he was [doing 27:39].  
33  
34 Virginia Emrich: Simone Simon came to Louisville, you know, to the University of  
35 Louisville...  
36  
37 Virginia Immerman: Oh, really?  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: ...when I was around the playhouse. Yes.  
40  
41 Virginia Immerman: Oh, really?  
42  
43 Virginia Emrich: [chuckle] I [inaudible 27:45] I chance to meet her too but.  
44

1 Virginia Immerman: But that's, uh, what we were doing. And I lived at, um, a small hotel. Um,  
2 [tsk] right near the [Inaudible 27:59], and, uh, we were, uh – our offices  
3 were in the Astoria Hotel, which later became Eisenhower's headquarters  
4 when you came to Paris. And then I believe it eventually became  
5 [inaudible 28:13] drugstore, and then it burned down.  
6

7 Virginia Emrich: Hm. [28:16] Well in Paris, did you have freedom on your days off or your  
8 time off...  
9

10 Virginia Immerman: Oh, yes.  
11

12 Virginia Emrich: ...to most any place you wanted to go?  
13

14 Virginia Immerman: We had all kinds of freedom. They did tell us that probably we shouldn't  
15 eat in the restaurants because the French people were having – we – they  
16 were still having problems with food, and, uh, so they'd discourage us  
17 from eating in the restaurants. But we did all sorts of things. We went to  
18 the [Inaudible 28:42]. I went to, um, the theater the first night that Maurice  
19 Chevalier performed in Paris after the war. Uh, we, eh, there were men  
20 still being brought back from Germany, who had been, uh, slave labor or  
21 labor in Germany because you would hear the trucks [going 29:04]...  
22

23 Virginia Emrich: [29:04] [Inaudible 29:04] people being...  
24

25 Virginia Immerman: Yes.  
26

27 Virginia Emrich: ... being returned.  
28

29 Virginia Immerman: Trucks going through the streets, and they would be singing, and I said  
30 who are they, you know...  
31

32 Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
33

34 Virginia Immerman: ...and they said well they're still coming back from Germany.  
35

36 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
37

38 Virginia Immerman: But the Metro was running, um, and we could go anywhere. We used to  
39 go to the flea market. Uh, what else did we do? I had a friend who, whose  
40 mother was French and had married an American, uh, soldier during  
41 World War I. The girl had been born of a French father who had been  
42 killed in World War I, and then her mother had married an, an American  
43 soldier, and, uh, so she had – she was in our [inaudible 29:44] company  
44 and was a good friend of mine, but then she was sent right on to Paris

1 because she spoke such good French. And she had looked up very  
2 laboriously all her old, uh, relatives, you know, because she had lost track  
3 of them during the war, and, uh, she – I used to go to dinner at their house  
4 with her.  
5  
6Virginia Emrich: [30:04] Uh, did you speak French?  
7  
8Virginia Immerman: I spoke a little bit. I had taken French...  
9  
10Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
11  
12Virginia Immerman: ...in, in school, but, uh, I was not that good, but I was one of the few.  
13 That's – she said that's why she used to take me. I was one of the few. I'd  
14 try anyway.  
15  
16Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
17  
18Virginia Immerman: And, uh, as a matter of fact, her, her nephew, uh, her cousin who was  
19 about our age, maybe a little younger, he and I would try to talk. He would  
20 try to talk English and I would try to talk French. We would walk back to  
21 the Metro at night after supper, and we would stumble along in each  
22 other's language. And we've always been interested, you know, and I used  
23 to get cards from him. And his mother told me when he got married and  
24 had children. And I got married, and I told her, and, and, uh, he eventually  
25 died, uh, recently. So we always sort of kept in touch.  
26  
27Virginia Emrich: Hm. [30:55] And what was the total time you were in Paris,  
28 approximately?  
29  
30Virginia Immerman: Let's see. Mm-hm. I was probably in Paris a year and a half I would say.  
31  
32Virginia Emrich: I see.  
33  
34Virginia Immerman: Uh, we were there until – at first they sent the married women home, and  
35 then they sent the people home who had lots of points, who had been in  
36 the service a long time...  
37  
38Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
39  
40Virginia Immerman: ...and then eventually, uh, the group that I was there were sent home, and  
41 they weren't going to have WAACs there anymore, not, not a real  
42 company. Some of the girls stayed on as civilians. You could do that.  
43  
44Virginia Emrich: I see.

1  
2 Virginia Immerman: [Inaudible 31:31].  
3  
4 Virginia Emrich: [31:33] Virginia, did you have any opportunity to see any of the other  
5 countries while you were in Europe?  
6  
7 Virginia Immerman: Oh, yes. We were, um, there were several trips to go on. For some reason,  
8 I never got that much leave. I – I always am stuck in a job where I never  
9 get the time that everybody-. Some of the girls went down to Biarritz. Uh,  
10 one girl went to Ireland. Um, when I was – I forgot to say that when I was  
11 in, um, London I went to, uh, Weymouth to visit, um, the mother of my  
12 aunt's husband.  
13  
14 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
15  
16 Virginia Immerman: She lived in Weymouth. And, uh, I spent 2 or 3 days there, and I found out  
17 how the progression of meals is there. When you get up in the morning,  
18 they have a thing to make coffee or tea right at the bedside, and you have  
19 tea and crackers, and then you get dressed and go down and you have  
20 some breakfast. And then, um, you can have lunch. And then you have a  
21 big tea very late in the afternoon, and then you just have can something  
22 later or not. So that was rather interesting to find out. She tried to make  
23 coffee for me, and they're not all that good at making coffee. And, uh, she  
24 just too the coffee grounds and put boiling water on it, you know, but she  
25 was a delightful person. And she took me down – that's right on the ocean  
26 – down to the, um, uh, place down there. I remember that that was at the  
27 period when it was hard to get stockings. They had really run out of  
28 stockings. And my mother had sent me a pair of stockings from the United  
29 States.  
30  
31 Virginia Emrich: [33:13] Were they nylon or silk?  
32  
33 Virginia Immerman: They were probably...  
34  
35 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 33:17].  
36  
37 Virginia Immerman: ...rayon by that time.  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
40  
41 Virginia Immerman: I don't think you were getting any, uh, silk or ray-, or nylon. And I had  
42 saved them for just an occasion like this, and, uh, when we started  
43 walking, uh, through the park, I remember it was filled with Canadian air  
44 force men on leave, my stocking started to droop, and I kept pulling them,

1 and the more I pulled them the longer they got. And I – they – I just  
2 couldn't control them. And, uh, my dear lady that I was with said what's  
3 the matter, Virginia? Have you got a ladder in your hose? And I eventually  
4 had to...

5

6Virginia Emrich: [Right 33:51].

7

8Virginia Immerman: ...sit down and take those stockings off. They were s-...

9

10Virginia Emrich: [laughter] [33:55] Did you know what she meant by ladder [inaudible]  
11 33:57]?

12

13Virginia Immerman: Yes, I knew. Yes, I knew that. But, uh...

14

15Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 34:01].

16

17Virginia Immerman: ...I'll never forget those awful stockings. But I did get to go, um, to, a,  
18 Brussels and, uh, and they seemed to have plenty of food there.

19

20Virginia Emrich: Hm.

21

22Virginia Immerman: And we went to see all the things that you hear about the little boy, the  
23 little statue.

24

25Virginia Emrich: Oh, yes.

26

27Virginia Immerman: And I found it easier to understand the French that they spoke there. I  
28 think it's because they also speak German, and, uh, it's a l-, not as liquid,  
29 and I could understand their French much better.

30

31Virginia Emrich: Yeah.

32

33Virginia Immerman: And, uh...

34

35Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.

36

37Virginia Immerman: ...we – the ga-, the funny – now I s-, I'm gonna tell this and you probably  
38 maybe want to erase it. But they would give you a penny. We didn't have  
39 amer-, uh, money, and they gave you a penny, and you could get on the  
40 trolley car and go to the place where you could change your money. And  
41 the trolley car ran through the center of Brussels [inaudible 34:56] street.  
42 And we got on and we kept – y-, you couldn't see anything, you know,  
43 and we were worried that we had missed it. And every time we would say

1 – see the U.S., we would get off, and we didn't have any more money, and  
2 it would always a United States prophylactic station.  
3  
4 Virginia Emrich: I don't know, uh, where they kept that, but that's alright.  
5  
6 [laughter]  
7  
8 Virginia Immerman: And we were so embarrassed. We saw the sign U.S. and all along, you  
9 know, and we kept getting off, and we didn't have any money, and a man  
10 would give us a penny, and we'd get back on again. We finally got to  
11 where...  
12  
13 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
14  
15 Virginia Immerman: ...we were – to get our money.  
16  
17 Virginia Emrich: Well, uh, that makes, uh, brings up another question. [35:40] Uh, did you  
18 s-, s-, was this an education to you, the life that you had with the WAACs  
19 or, uh, were you [cognizant 35:50] of a lot of things that you saw going on  
20 over there? Did you approve of everything that you saw or d-, eh, not?  
21  
22 Virginia Immerman: Well, um, for some reason my, um, n-, naivete remained with me. I really  
23 didn't, uh, I was very naive and virginal person when I went in the service,  
24 and, um, I know that there were some things that surprised me a little bit  
25 because I was very fussy about who I took up with, you know, and so  
26 forth, but I would see other girls, um, behaving differently. Um, most of  
27 the girls that I was in the company with were very nice. It was just like a  
28 group of college girls as a matter of fact. Um, I know there were things  
29 that went on, but I didn't really – none of my friends were involved. And I  
30 don't think I realized what life was life [chuckle] was all about. It took a  
31 lot longer.  
32  
33 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 36:47].  
34  
35 Virginia Immerman: Um, the only thing I do remember, I remember some of the officers who,  
36 eh, they would – I know one in particular. He had been in Germany for  
37 years, and he got back. He had been in our office, and he had been sent  
38 over during the, you know, the fighting and came back. And I remember  
39 he was going to see his British girlfriend who had been there, and he kept  
40 saying what a wonderful girl she was and how appreciative, and yet, he  
41 was also calling his wife at home, and when his wife got on, he was  
42 crying. And, uh, I think I realized then that m-, men quite often have a  
43 [chuckle] dual life.  
44

1 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
2  
3 Virginia Immerman: I saw quite a bit of that.  
4  
5 Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
6  
7 Virginia Immerman: They said they cleared out the Officers Club when dependents started  
8 coming in, and it was quite interesting.  
9  
10 Virginia Emrich: [37:38] But did you run into any animosities either among natives of the  
11 countries where you were or in among service people in any way? Did any  
12 of the men ever resent having women on the base or women overseas  
13 even?  
14  
15 Virginia Immerman: I didn't run into any animosity anywhere. I loved the British, and they  
16 were always wanting to show us things and be friendly with us. I loved the  
17 French. They – one man got off the Metro and walked all the way, um, to,  
18 eh, off several streets down to show us where the flea market was. I got a  
19 lot of attention in France because I was tall and had blonde hair.  
20  
21 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
22  
23 Virginia Immerman: And they were always, you know, trying to help me.  
24  
25 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
26  
27 Virginia Immerman: And, uh, um, I just don't – and the natives in, in Africa just loved us, you  
28 know. Uh, there were some who were in the town and I remember one  
29 time walking along and seeing a woman cooking over a stove, and she had  
30 a knife in her hand, and she threw it when we went by, so she did not like  
31 us, but, uh, the ones that we came in contact we did. I didn't find any  
32 animosity. Most of the men really liked us. The, the strangest thing, one  
33 time we went to Camp Phillip Morris. We went down to Antwerp or some  
34 place, and it was the big base where they – all the men were waiting to get  
35 home, and we walked in there, and not a single one looked up. There were  
36 acres and acres of men waiting [for 'me 39:02]. Not one looked up, and we  
37 weren't used to that, you know.  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: I guess was there a reason that [inaudible 39:08].  
40  
41 Virginia Immerman: We don't know. Uh, eh, we were both surprised, you know. We d-, we  
42 only went in there to get coffee or something.  
43  
44 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.

1  
2 Virginia Immerman: You know, in, in, uh, Europe when we were there, you could go down to  
3 the railroad station at the RTO, and, uh, I th-, we either rode free on the  
4 trains or we paid a very small amount. It was, it was called the RTO, and  
5 you could go anywhere on the RTO...  
6  
7 Virginia Emrich: [Oh 39:31]. Uh-huh.  
8  
9 Virginia Immerman: ...[inaudible 39:31] Americans could do that.  
10  
11 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
12  
13 Virginia Immerman: And, uh, we went to Antwerp one day. I remember it was pouring rain in  
14 France, in, in Paris, and we, we wanted to get away, and we had a day off  
15 this friend and I, and we went to the railroad station. We didn't know  
16 where we wanted to go, and we, we were talking, and he said well, you  
17 know it's raining there too, you know. We said well, anywhere, we'll go.  
18 We went to Antwerp anyway.  
19  
20 Virginia Emrich: Yeah. [39:55] Uh, but now from England, uh, after you left or when did  
21 you leave England...  
22  
23 Virginia Immerman: I...  
24  
25 Virginia Emrich: ...and under what circumstances?  
26  
27 Virginia Immerman: ...I, uh, we – the headquarters was moving to Paris, and the night that I  
28 arrived in Paris was VJ-Night, and I had waited – we had been waiting in  
29 – at Bovington Airport, I think it was, all day. There was some mixup in  
30 the plane, and everybo-, everything was probably, maybe it was because it  
31 was VJ, eh, Day, I don't know, but we had a long wait for a plane, and we  
32 were there all day long. I remember Raymond Massey being in the airport  
33 waiting for his plane too.  
34  
35 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 40:40].  
36  
37 Virginia Immerman: And I also remember...  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: [20:42] Was he in uniform?  
40  
41 Virginia Immerman: Hm, I don't know whether he was a – in special services or not. I just  
42 remember him. He didn't have a army uniform.  
43  
44 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 40:50].

1  
2Virginia Immerman: But I remembered, uh, sitting at the coffee counter and talking to some  
3 young men who were soldiers coming back from Germany, and I started  
4 t-, they'd talked to me and I was talking to them and one of them started to  
5 cry. He had been an infantry man, and h-, they had been in German prison  
6 camp.  
7  
8Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
9  
10Virginia Immerman: One of the boys, you know, was very cheerful and everything, but the  
11 other one started to cry, and I didn't know, know why, and the other  
12 friend, who seemed to take care of him, was telling all about their  
13 experiences in the, um, camp. And he said that the boy who was crying  
14 had not heard from his family since he had been gone, and he was just  
15 worried. You know, that was the first thing they all did as soon as they got  
16 out was to telephone.  
17  
18Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
19  
20Virginia Immerman: I mean you couldn't get in line to get a telephone. But I remember the  
21 cheerful one told about trying to make a cake out of, um, these small  
22 packets of things that the Red Cross would send every now and then, sugar  
23 and whatever.  
24  
25Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
26  
27Virginia Immerman: He didn't know how to make a cake or anything, but none of them had had  
28 cake for so long in this German prison camp...  
29  
30Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
31  
32Virginia Immerman: ...and he tried to make cake, and, uh, he evidentially was, you know...  
33  
34Virginia Emrich: Hm.  
35  
36Virginia Immerman: ...the kind who made the most of a bad situation.  
37  
38Virginia Emrich: Hm.  
39  
40Virginia Immerman: But I remember being very shook by the young man who...  
41  
42Virginia Emrich: Hm.  
43  
44Virginia Immerman: ...had tears falling down in his eyes.

1  
2 Virginia Emrich: Yeah. [42:15] Uh, w-, were there any moments that you felt that you were  
3 in danger or, uh, that something also might h-, have happened?  
4  
5 Virginia Immerman: We, we were never in danger as far as I know. Um, a group of girls from  
6 Accra, who, uh, were, um, who came in the plane after us and one of them  
7 was my roommate went down, and they never found any trace of them.  
8  
9 Virginia Emrich: [42:44] At what point was the plane?  
10  
11 Virginia Immerman: Eh, it was off the coast of, um, oh that was probably called Dakar then. It  
12 was off the coast of Africa. It hadn't gone terribly far.  
13  
14 Virginia Emrich: [42:56] Into the water [inaudible 42:58]?  
15  
16 Virginia Immerman: Yeah. It went down. They called in a mayday.  
17  
18 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
19  
20 Virginia Immerman: And, uh, we were in – I think we were in Casablanca when we got word of  
21 it, and, uh, we later found out they used to send out searching parties. All  
22 the girls who were still on the base and the men would go out. You could  
23 volunteer, and they went on searching parties. And they never found any  
24 trace of the girls, and there were 18 girls on that.  
25  
26 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 43:22].  
27  
28 Virginia Immerman: We later had a service for them in London.  
29  
30 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
31  
32 Virginia Immerman: In a chapel in London.  
33  
34 Virginia Emrich: [Alright 43:28]. [43:29] Uh, [tsk] I'm searching for – was your, your h-,  
35 you said you were lucky in, uh, most of the time in your housing and, and  
36 the places where you stayed or were billeted, did that follow all the way  
37 through your service?  
38  
39 Virginia Immerman: Most of the – we had regular billets in, in Love Field, and you did KP. Uh,  
40 part of the reason I was lucky because my name began with O. Some  
41 places you go, they start at the beginning of the alphabet, and other places  
42 they start at the end, and I'm in the middle, so I missed it a lot of times.  
43

1 Virginia Emrich: [44:02] Which reminds me, did you mention that you were O'Rourke at  
2 the time you were in service?  
3  
4 Virginia Immerman: No, I forgot to say that. [chuckle]  
5  
6 Virginia Emrich: I, I think you did. Yes. Uh, so it's a good time to introduce that as your  
7 maiden name and Immerman as your married name.  
8  
9 Virginia Immerman: Yes.  
10  
11 Virginia Emrich: [44:19] Uh, well, uh, can you think of any more memorable occasions  
12 while you were on location, so to speak or in, uh, in your – while you were  
13 in the service?  
14  
15 Virginia Immerman: No, except that, um, the trip to Switzerland was very, um, eh, very  
16 exciting and interesting. Uh...  
17  
18 Virginia Emrich: [44:40] With whom did you go to Switzerland?  
19  
20 Virginia Immerman: I went with a girl who – you, you just signed up for them, and, and then  
21 when y-, I went with a girl who lived in my barracks or not my barracks,  
22 in my hotel suite.  
23  
24 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
25  
26 Virginia Immerman: I had a hotel suite [that's 44:54]...  
27  
28 Virginia Emrich: [44:54] Well you did live well.  
29  
30 [laughter]  
31  
32 Virginia Immerman: Yes. I had my single bed in one little room and we had, um, French  
33 paintings. It was very nice. Uh, uh, they had the extra piece of plumbing  
34 there and you could take a bath.  
35  
36 Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
37  
38 Virginia Immerman: The only thing was that the, uh, electricity wasn't always too reliable, and  
39 you would quite often be right in the middle of getting dressed to go out  
40 on a date or taking a bath and the lights would all go out, you know.  
41  
42 Virginia Emrich: [45:21] Did you get used to having candles or lighting candles or  
43 [inaudible 45:24]?  
44

1 Virginia Immerman: Well, we didn't. We just waited and they'd be back on again.  
2  
3 Virginia Emrich: They would? Oh.  
4  
5 Virginia Immerman: And, uh, we had, um, the people in – it was a small hotel, and the regular  
6 staff were still working there who, eh, I later met them when I went back  
7 to visit. They were still there.  
8  
9 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
10  
11 Virginia Immerman: They would do anything for you for 2 cigarettes. That was our tip. And  
12 they thought we were really great you know. And, uh, 2 cigarettes was the  
13 tip.  
14  
15 Virginia Emrich: [45:49] By the way, did you have an issue of cigarettes or did you have to  
16 buy your cigarettes [inaudible 45:54]?  
17  
18 Virginia Immerman: You had an allotment, uh, on, um, a card that they, eh, d-, and I never  
19 black marketed. Now I know that a lot of people did, most everybody did,  
20 but I don't know, I never did. I used to give my cigarettes and candy and  
21 extra things to this French family...  
22  
23 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
24  
25 Virginia Immerman: ...that I used to go visit a lot. Um, but I never black marketed.  
26  
27 Virginia Emrich: [45:17] Did you have a liquor ration?  
28  
29 Virginia Immerman: No, I don't think we did. Uh, I don't remember having...  
30  
31 Virginia Emrich: Okay.  
32  
33 Virginia Immerman: ...any liquor.  
34  
35 Virginia Emrich: [45:24] Uh...  
36  
37 Virginia Immerman: ...beer.  
38  
39 Virginia Emrich: ...did you for the most part get whatever a, a man in the same position in  
40 the army would have gotten or whatever was issued to the men, did the  
41 women also have the same in, in, uh, well, like their cigarettes, uh,  
42 [inaudible 45:41]?  
43  
44 Virginia Immerman: Well I'm sure we did. We...

1  
2 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 45:43].  
3  
4 Virginia Immerman: ...it never was an, uh, uh, it never, never came up.  
5  
6 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible] [issue 45:48].  
7  
8 Virginia Immerman: We were very separate from them.  
9  
10 Virginia Emrich: I see.  
11  
12 Virginia Immerman: Although, um, the men, the men did used to eat in our mess in, in Paris.  
13 They weren't billeted with us, but they ate in our mess.  
14  
15 Virginia Emrich: [47:00] Maybe they were guests of [inaudible 47:02]?  
16  
17 Virginia Immerman: No, they ate regularly with us.  
18  
19 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
20  
21 Virginia Immerman: Because we had formed some really good friendships. Uh, quite often the  
22 men would be able to get a, a vehicle, you know, a military vehicle, and  
23 we went to the [Inaudible] [Dome 47:15], and, uh, we went on trips to  
24 [Versailles 47:18]. I have pictures of us going to [Versailles 47:21]. Uh, I  
25 was in the, uh, Louvre the first day that the, uh, [Inaudible 47:27] was on  
26 display.  
27  
28 Virginia Emrich: Hm.  
29  
30 Virginia Immerman: I remember being, uh, kind of wondering why so much was made of it you  
31 know. [laughter] At the time...  
32  
33 Virginia Emrich: Yeah. Yeah.  
34  
35 Virginia Immerman: ...anyway.  
36  
37 Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
38  
39 Virginia Immerman: Uh, and we just, uh, had a really good time. And then in Switzerland, uh,  
40 you had a choice of places, but if you weren't one of the first ones to  
41 choose, you had to take what was left, and we ended up on a skiing tour,  
42 and I didn't ski and neither did my friend, uh, but we, uh – you got free s-,  
43 you, you, you got your hotel tr-, your travel and your food and free ski  
44 equipment, and free ski, uh, instruction.

1  
2 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
3  
4 Virginia Immerman: Of course, Switzerland was trying to get b-, [inaudible 48:16]. A lot of  
5 things were done, I'm sure to get these countries back on their feet again  
6 because the Switzerland had not had, uh, the hotels had not had, uh,  
7 people there and, uh, for all those years, not very many people.  
8  
9 Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
10  
11 Virginia Immerman: And the food in Switzerland was just out of this world. It was so rich, I  
12 remember whipped cream on things, and they just made of us like, you  
13 know, they just – and, uh, we did go out skiing, although I wasn't very  
14 good. But there was one boy with us who was on the [20th 48:46]  
15 Mountain Ski Team, and, uh...  
16  
17 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
18  
19 Virginia Immerman: ...and another boy from New York. He learned to ski I remember, and at  
20 the end of the trip, you were supposed to go up on the Gornergrat and ski  
21 d-, down, but by that time, I had given up.  
22  
23 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
24  
25 Virginia Immerman: [laughter]  
26  
27 Virginia Emrich: [49:01] Well, eh, in other words, uh, usually the opportunities for the  
28 service, uh, [inaudible 49:06] the service were the same for men and, and  
29 women?  
30  
31 Virginia Immerman: I'm sure.  
32  
33 Virginia Emrich: And...  
34  
35 Virginia Immerman: As a matter of fact, uh, the men complained because they were in an old  
36 castle out in the country at one time, and they weren't in town, and they  
37 eventually, uh, they wrote letters to, uh, *Yank Magazine*, and they fussed  
38 so much they eventually...  
39  
40 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
41  
42 Virginia Immerman: ...brought them in town. So...  
43  
44 Virginia Emrich: I see.

1  
2 Virginia Immerman: ...so actually, we, we were, uh, eh, lots of times we were treated a little  
3 better than the men. Eh, sometimes when we were traveling, they – we'd eat  
4 in the Officers Mess. Uh, we were billeted in officers barracks. Uh, why I  
5 don't know. We were treated better than the men because there were fewer  
6 of us, and I suppose they just couldn't throw us in with the women, and  
7 they didn't have facilities for women. So we quite often were, uh, treated  
8 the way the Red Cross or the, uh, officers were treated.  
9  
10 Virginia Emrich: [50:02] Uh, did you all have R&R, uh, or where you there long enough to,  
11 to go, uh, on leave [inaudible 50:11]?  
12  
13 Virginia Immerman: Well they didn't call it R&R, but they – you leaves. You w-, it, it w-, it's  
14 all set up. You – after you've worked a certain length of time, you have a  
15 certain amount of leave coming to you.  
16  
17 Virginia Emrich: [50:21] Is that the way most of the, uh, places?  
18  
19 Virginia Immerman: Yes, or you get 3-day passes. Uh...  
20  
21 Virginia Emrich: I see.  
22  
23 Virginia Immerman: ...for instance if you wanted to go...  
24  
25 Virginia Emrich: Right.  
26  
27 Virginia Immerman: ...Brussels, you have a 3-day pass.  
28  
29 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
30  
31 Virginia Immerman: They would go to Biarritz on a 3-day pass. Uh, you would have to take a  
32 week's leave probably to go to Switzerland, so, um.  
33  
34 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. [50:39] Do you know of any great changes that have  
35 taken place, eh, in the, uh, among women in service? Uh, I don't know  
36 whether you're familiar with any of the pre-, our recent relax. Have you  
37 heard of any, uh, rules or regulations being changed that you thought were  
38 better or not as good or anything like that?  
39  
40 Virginia Immerman: I don't really know what the, uh, present day army is like. I imagine they  
41 have more freedom because the men seem to have more freedom. Uh, we,  
42 uh, of course it was during wartime too, and things are different during  
43 wartime. The things that I remember, you had to have your hair above  
44 your collar. Uh, that was everything – everybody wanted long hair when

1 we first got out the service because we got so sick of – and men liked long  
2 hair, you know. They always liked long hair. Uh, you were supposed to  
3 wear, uh, regulation shoes and so forth, but when we got to Paris, they let  
4 us – started letting us wear pumps to work.  
5  
6 Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
7  
8 Virginia Immerman: And, uh, I never minded the regulations. So I didn't give it too much  
9 thought. The only thing, um, I do remember in Africa that we were, uh,  
10 uh, we were examined once a month, and I always had the feeling that it  
11 was to find out whether you were pregnant or not. You got a female  
12 examination once a month, which I think is a little bit out of the ordinary.  
13  
14 Virginia Emrich: Ah-ha. [52:07] Were any women that you knew sent home because they  
15 were found to be pregnant?  
16  
17 Virginia Immerman: Yes. We h-, we had a – 2 or 3 who got pregnant and went home.  
18  
19 Virginia Emrich: I see. Well. [52:17] Uh, were they given a dishonorable discharge do you  
20 suppose?  
21  
22 Virginia Immerman: I, I don't know. I really don't know. I think they probably were. I know  
23 they – at that time, it was not considered, uh, a good thing to do.  
24  
25 Virginia Emrich: [52:32] Uh, well now, uh, w-, okay, that bring you, eh, eh, from, uh,  
26 Europe back home again.  
27  
28 Virginia Immerman: Yeah, they sent us to Phillip Morris, which is a great big, uh, debarkation,  
29 I guess you'd call it [point 52:45], which was a dismal place. There was  
30 nothing there to do except eat, and, and eating became the biggest thing.  
31 We would all get in line...  
32  
33 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
34  
35 Virginia Immerman: ...about an hour before meals, you know...  
36  
37 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
38  
39 Virginia Immerman: ...and complain because – we had made us a song because there was only  
40 1 meat-, they'd only give you 1 meatball. We were used to [inaudible  
41 53:02]. We would...  
42  
43 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 53:04].  
44

1 Virginia Immerman: ...we couldn't wait to get back, uh, h-, to get out of there, and, uh, they  
2 marched us down eventually to our ship. We were coming home on a ship,  
3 and it was a hospital ship. As a matter of fact, it was the sister ship to a  
4 ship that my brother had served on as a hospital coroner during the war.  
5  
6 Virginia Emrich: Oh, well [inaudible 53:25].  
7  
8 Virginia Immerman: And, uh, I came, uh, back on the Blanche Sigman, and he was on the  
9 Huddleston I think it was, and they were sister ships. But we – it looked  
10 like a little rowboat there. It – we...  
11  
12 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
13  
14 Virginia Immerman: ...we l-, we all said it's awful small, and all the sailors were up there, and  
15 they were insulted because [laughter] it looked so small to us.  
16  
17 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
18  
19 Virginia Immerman: And, uh, but it, uh, it was [fine 53:47].  
20  
21 Virginia Emrich: [53:47] Did it ride well [inaudible 53:48]?  
22  
23 Virginia Immerman: Eh, it was okay.  
24  
25 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
26  
27 Virginia Immerman: I never got seasick. I never missed a meal. But some of the girls, I think  
28 it's were they put you. I was pretty up, pretty high. If they put you in the  
29 hold, I think it's worse. And, uh, some of the girls, eh, we never saw them  
30 again until, uh, after we got in, in and they looked like death warmed over.  
31  
32 Virginia Emrich: [44:08] You mean they were in sickbay most of the time [inaudible  
33 54:09]?  
34  
35 Virginia Immerman: Well they never c-, got off their bed...  
36  
37 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
38  
39 Virginia Immerman: ...they were so sick. And it, it did get a little rocky sometimes. I even  
40 remember some of the mess attendants, uh, being, you know, ill and not  
41 being ab-, but I n-, for some reason. I think I gained about 10 pounds. And  
42 we had milk for the first time in 2 years.  
43  
44 Virginia Emrich: Oh. Oh, you gained 10 pounds. [54:40] What did...

1  
2Virginia Immerman: On the ship.  
3  
4Virginia Emrich: ...did that put you at?  
5  
6 [laughter]  
7  
8Virginia Immerman: I don't know.  
9  
10Virginia Emrich: It's interesting [inaudible 54:33]  
11  
12Virginia Immerman: I don't know, but it was. It...  
13  
14Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
15  
16Virginia Immerman: ...it didn't show very much because I was pretty, uh, you know  
17  
18Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
19  
20Virginia Immerman: ...in good condition.  
21  
22Virginia Emrich: [54:40] Well when you traveled, uh, was most of your traveling or from  
23 one assignment to another by ship or did you fly to at any time.  
24  
25Virginia Immerman: Uh, we flew all the time except coming home. We came home on a ship.  
26  
27Virginia Emrich: I see.  
28  
29Virginia Immerman: Yeah. So we flew all the time.  
30  
31Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
32  
33Virginia Immerman: We were the Air Transport Command.  
34  
35Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
36  
37Virginia Immerman: And there was no other way anyhow. We flew – my first flight that I ever  
38 was on was my flight from Miami to a-, a-, Africa. I had never been on a  
39 plane before.  
40  
41Virginia Emrich: [55:11] Is that so?  
42  
43Virginia Immerman: A lot of them hadn't been on a plane before.  
44

1 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh. [55:14] Well, um, alright, and you went to what, uh, a port, what  
2 ent-, entry?  
3  
4 Virginia Immerman: We came into New York.  
5  
6 Virginia Emrich: Into New York. I see.  
7  
8 Virginia Immerman: And, uh, we saw the Statue of Liberty, and they had – they still, you know,  
9 when people came in, I don't know if you know that, but they had a boat  
10 that would come out. A lot of people would [inaudible 55:34].  
11  
12 Virginia Emrich: Yeah, yeah.  
13  
14 Virginia Immerman: I guess they were USO people or something.  
15  
16 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 55:36]. Uh-huh.  
17  
18 Virginia Immerman: Well we [had that 55:38].  
19  
20 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
21  
22 Virginia Immerman: I had heard about it...  
23  
24 Virginia Emrich: Good.  
25  
26 Virginia Immerman: ...and they [were there 55:39].  
27  
28 Virginia Emrich: Good.  
29  
30 Virginia Immerman: And, um, I really can't remember exactly what happened. Um, I know that,  
31 that, uh, I – they, they examined us before we went off, and I remember  
32 the doctor. You know that depressor they put on your tongue? He forgot to  
33 change it, and, and he put it in my mouth so fast, and I got the most awful  
34 sore throat. And I was finally put in the hospital. I couldn't go home right  
35 away. I had a very bad sore throat.  
36  
37 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 56:11].  
38  
39 Virginia Immerman: And I always thought that was the reason.  
40  
41 Virginia Emrich: Well [inaudible 56:14].  
42

1 Virginia Immerman: He had this tongue depressor, you know, and he's going [through it  
2 56:16], and he forgot to throw that one away, and I said oh, and it was too  
3 late. It was in my mouth.  
4

5 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
6

7 Virginia Immerman: So I had to spend some time in the hospital. I really had a very [inaudible  
8 56:25].  
9

10 Virginia Emrich: And had your group gone on?  
11

12 Virginia Immerman: They went on, and, uh...  
13

14 Virginia Emrich: [56:29] So, uh, uh, what happened from then? Then did you travel to  
15 another, uh...  
16

17 Virginia Immerman: Um...  
18

19 Virginia Emrich: ...place by yourself [inaudible 56:36].  
20

21 Virginia Immerman: Uh, after I got out of the hospital...  
22

23 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
24

25 Virginia Immerman: ...I had, I – we – I was not, um, I hadn't gotten out of the service yet, and I  
26 hadn't made up my mind. Some of us were thinking of staying in. And I  
27 came home, and, um, I, um, was on leave for a little while, and then I  
28 came back, and I went to, uh, talk to the woman who was in charge of the  
29 Air Transport Command, and she was an officer, and I don't remember  
30 her name, but she was not very encouraging. Eh, it's really strange.  
31 Because I felt that I would be a good candidate to stay in. But she says I  
32 don't really think that, uh, there's going to be, uh, a women's, uh, group...  
33

34 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
35

36 Virginia Immerman: ...very much longer. She actually said that to me.  
37

38 Virginia Emrich: Well.  
39

40 Virginia Immerman: She was very, um...  
41

42 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 57:25].  
43

44 Virginia Immerman: She really didn't encourage me to...

1  
2 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
3  
4 Virginia Immerman: ...stay in. And, uh, I went – was sent to Fort Totten, and I was there for a  
5 very short time and decided, eh, I, I met another WAAC who was, um,  
6 had been in the Pacific, and, uh, she was planning on going to college, and  
7 I had never thought about going back to school, and, uh, I guess she's the  
8 one who put the idea in my head. And we used to go into New York, and  
9 you could see all the plays for free when you were in the service.  
10  
11 Virginia Emrich: Oh.  
12  
13 Virginia Immerman: You'd go and ask for a ticket [inaudible 58:00].  
14  
15 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 58:00].  
16  
17 Virginia Immerman: It was marvelous.  
18  
19 Virginia Emrich: Oh, yeah.  
20  
21 Virginia Immerman: And that was my first really introduction to New York, see.  
22  
23 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
24  
25 Virginia Immerman: And we went to see several plays.  
26  
27 Virginia Emrich: Uh-huh.  
28  
29 Virginia Immerman: And she was, um, rather, you know, nice person, and I don't even  
30 remember her name anymore, but she's the one who got me thinking  
31 about going to college, and then when I got back, I didn't know what to do  
32 with myself, and, uh, I w-...  
33  
34 Virginia Emrich: [58:24] And you went back t-, to your home in Massachusetts?  
35  
36 Virginia Immerman: I went ba-, I, yes, I went back. I was in Brookline. My mother was in  
37 Brookline, Massachusetts, at that time, and I was there, and I was casting  
38 around for something to do. And I was getting letters from various, girls  
39 and some of them had already gone back overseas. They were in Japan,  
40 and, uh, I, uh, didn't know what to do, and I saw an ad that they were  
41 opening a new college at Boston University, and I called them, and I took  
42 the test and evidentially did very well, and I went to college.  
43  
44 Virginia Emrich: [58:58] Did you attend on the GI Bill? Was it a help?

1  
2 Virginia Immerman: I went on the GI Bill.  
3  
4 Virginia Emrich: Oh, so it did help you. [59:03] Uh, do you remember exactly when – what  
5 year you were discharged from the Army?  
6  
7 Virginia Immerman: Yeah, it was in J-, June of 1946.  
8  
9 Virginia Emrich: Nineteen-forty-six. I see. [59:13] And did you attend just the one college?  
10  
11 Virginia Immerman: Uh, I went to, um, Boston, uh, Boston University for 4 years. And then,  
12 um, after that I went back and worked for the government [inaudible  
13 59:25] for the Military Assistance Advisory Group in [Hague 59:29] and  
14 then later for the...  
15  
16 Virginia Emrich: Oh, you went back to Europe?  
17  
18 Virginia Immerman: Yes...  
19  
20 Virginia Emrich: [Inaudible 59:32].  
21  
22 Virginia Immerman: ...after I graduated. In 1950.  
23  
24 Virginia Emrich: I see. Uh-huh.  
25  
26 Virginia Immerman: And I worked for the United States, uh, Military Assistance Advisory  
27 Group. And, uh, then I went to Berlin and worked for the Office of Special  
28 Investigations of the Air Force, and I worked 2 years overseas.  
29  
30 Virginia Emrich: [59:49] How do you compare your military service with your civilian  
31 service [inaudible 59:54]? Was there much difference?  
32  
33 Virginia Immerman: Well it was, uh, oh, eh, there was, um, it was – a lot of it was similar, but,  
34 uh, you had much more freedom. You, you weren't, uh, you didn't have to  
35 stick with your own class as it were, you know, and, uh...  
36  
37 Virginia Emrich: No restrictions then I guess, huh?  
38  
39 Virginia Immerman: N-, no real restrictions. Uh, um, I had about as good a time. I, I think that  
40 the war time was a different time for us. Everybody was in it, and, uh, eh,  
41 eh, you also had a feeling that you didn't know whether it was ever gonna  
42 be over. You know, you, you lost sight of the future. Whereas, um, in, uh,  
43 when you became a civilian, it wasn't war time. There were different

1 people. N-, not everybody was in. Most people were back home trying  
2 to...  
3  
4 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
5  
6 Virginia Immerman: ...make a life out for themselves.  
7  
8 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm.  
9  
10 Virginia Immerman: But there were a lot of similarities.  
11  
12 Virginia Emrich: Mm-hm. I'm trying to follow your life that, uh, the steps that brought you  
13 to Louisville. [1:00:56] Now from where you stopped, can you pick it up  
14 and just tell me [inaudible 1:01:00]?  
15  
16 Virginia Immerman: Okay. Well both of my brothers were in college too. They all – they went  
17 to college. And when the youngest one graduated, um, there was a lot of  
18 recruiting in those days of companies, and he was recruited by, uh, Carson  
19 Scott Pirie or Pirie. I never can remember their names but, eh, it's a big  
20 store in, uh, Chicago. So he, um, went to live in Evanston and worked in  
21 Chicago. And then my other brother, who went to Tufts, when he  
22 graduated he needed a job too, and, uh, he, um, went to Chicago, and, uh,  
23 he got a job for, um, Fairbanks [Inaudible 1:01:40] Company. Well then  
24 my mother, who, uh, was, eh, living with an aunt I think at the time, uh,  
25 came with him to live, and she got ill. She was dying of cancer eventually.  
26 And, uh, that's how I happened to come back.  
27  
28 I came back a little early. I was almost due to come home after – every 2  
29 years they sent you home. But, uh, I came home a little bit early because  
30 she was sick and she eventually died, and, uh, I stayed in Chicago and  
31 worked in a big insurance company where I met my husband, and I got  
32 married in Chicago. And we were married for about 3 or 4 years. I had a  
33 little girl. And, uh, we got a divorce. And, uh, I needed to get away, and  
34 my aunt, uh, I wanted to come back to Boston, and my aunt who lived  
35 there said she'd help me. So I went back to Boston and, and stayed there  
36 for a little while. And then, uh, she had moved away, and I was there all  
37 alone, and sh-, [Kathy 1:02:42] was going into first grade, and y-, there  
38 you went to the first grade for only half a day, and I, I had had her in a  
39 little nursery school, which was very nice, but I had to have someone take  
40 care of her, so she c-, we came here because my cousin had moved here.  
41 Her husband who had been recruited for, for Seagram's when he got out of  
42 the University of New Hampshire. That's, you know, what happened in  
43 those days.  
44

1 Virginia Emrich: Yeah.  
2  
3 Virginia Immerman: People moved around. And so that – I came here.  
4  
5 Virginia Emrich: Well I think that just about finishes our tape, which gets you to Louisville.  
6 [chuckle]  
7  
8 Virginia Immerman: Yeah.  
9  
10 Virginia Emrich: Thank you a lot.  
11  
12  
13/lo