

CONNIE RICHARDSON

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Damian Macey Interviewer

Transcribed by Donna Duzan, December 2016

D: This is Damian Macey, from the Friends of the Library, and today, April 16th, I am with Connie Richardson. She is now residing at the Burnside Home after a fall and she is here temporarily and I am going to let her tell her story. Connie tell us about where you were born, how you grew up, brothers and sisters, schools, your family, anything you want to tell about your childhood.

C: I was born in Detroit, and we moved to Monroe, Michigan at an early age. I attended St Mary's Academy in Monroe. Then after high school I was working at the JC Penney's store and a service recruiter came in and talked me into joining the service. I first went to Louisville, KY for a while and then I got shipped out and went overseas. I was in England, France and Germany.

D: What branch of the service were you in?

C: It started out being called the Women's Auxiliary Army Corp. Then the name changed to the Women's Army Corp. I was at first stationed at Louisville then our group got shipped to England. I was overseas three years in England, France and Germany. And I met my husband in France, we worked in the same office. He got out of the service before I did. He had gotten a job back in the states already, he was from Cayuga, Indiana. He came to Marshall just waiting on me to come home. So we were married in Monroe, Michigan at the catholic church, he wasn't catholic at the time. Then he got a job at the Indianapolis Stock Yards.

D: What was that young man's name?

C: Fores Richardson, no "t"

D: Yes, I know many people thought it was Forest.

D: So he moved to Monroe and worked at a mill and then we moved to Frankfort IN and he worked at the stock yards there.

D: So you met him in the military.

C: Yes, we met in France.

D: What were you responsible for when you were in England and France?

C: I worked in the office and Fores did too.

D: So you worked in the same office?

C: Yes, he was good friends with the Captain. He didn't make a very good impression on me the first

day. He was sitting with his back to me and the Captain said to him "Fores, this is Connie and she will be working with you in the office ." And he must have raised his bottom off the chair this much to respond, so I was not favorable impressed. So we worked there a year and a half together. And then I got sent to Germany for about a year. He got sent home before I did and had a job at the mill. He had an apartment just around the corner from where my dad and I lived. I was the last one, I was one of seven.

D: And that was in Monroe, Michigan,

C: Yes, we were there a few months then we moved to Frankfort to work in the stock yards.

D: So you got married after you came home from overseas?

C: Yes, he wasn't catholic at the time when we were married in Monroe. Then he got an offer from his dad to work in his stock yards. And I don't know how long we stayed there in Frankfort .

D: In that military experience did any particular event or anything that you remember make an indelible impression on you?

C: Well, they were strict with us, we had our own recreation place on the base, like a dance hall. I think that was in England. Then in France when I met Rich, he was a Master Sergeant in the office, kind of in charge. But like I said, he did not make a very good first impression!

D: What was your rank in the military?

C: I was a Staff Sergeant.

D: With that rank, were you supervising anyone?

C: No, because we were there working in the office. You didn't have like a Captain, I can hardly remember.

D: Did you learn to speak any French or German?

C: No, but I'll tell you one thing... when I was in France we were on an air base and this GI came up one time and asked me if I would like a parachute. And I asked him what in the hell would I want a parachute forit was a parachute that had not passed the test.... but I took it and went to a seamstress who didn't speak English and I asked her to make me something out of it. She took the parachute and took my measurements and made me a long robe, made out of the nylon, and a short robe and also made me a bed jacket. And she had them done in about a week and when I asked her what I owed her.... guess what she wantedpackages of cigarettes. They were at a premium. I think I probably gave her three packs...she probably sold them for a high high price. But that is all she wanted. Of course, there was an interpreter there to help us.

D: Well, in a parachute there would be a lot of material.

C: Oh, yes, and it was made all by hand, without machines. I loaned it for display to the Marshall

Library.

D: Do you wear them?

C: No, well I did, when Rich and I got married, after a month or so, (we got married on Valentine's Day) we went to visit his dad, who I had never met. Well, I got ready for bed and had on the robe, and I asked Rich where was the bathroom, and he said right there, and I said where? well, the bathroom was outside and there I was with that long robe on going out to the bathroom. I was so furious. I sure didn't know I was going to have to use an outside bathroom !!

D: Was it cold weather?

C: Yes, it was, I think I put on his slippers to go out, but he just said it so nonchalant, like it was no big deal!! I thought to myself, is this a bunch of hillbillies or what !

D: They usually put them some distance from the house for good reason.

C: And I thought what did I get into with this family? We lived over my dad's store in a small town.

D: So that was over your dad's store?

C: No, that was in Monroe, MI, I went to St Mary's Academy there.

D: What kind of store did he have? Was it a grocery store?

C: Yes, my dad had a grocery store. But like I said, when I got out of the service, Rich had already come home and had a job at a steel mill. And then he got the job at Frankfort, IN.

D: Was that owned by someone else?

C: His dad owned the stock yard.

D: I am trying to think where Frankfort is.

C: Not too far from Indianapolis.

D: So about how long did you live there?

C: Well we lived at my dad's house, he was gone to Florida and he called us and told us they were sleeping in the car because they couldn't find any place to stay. Then they finally found a cabin and he told me he would not be home for the wedding. And I told him don't come home for the wedding. So we got married in St Mary's Catholic Church in Frankfort.

D: So did you go from Frankfort, IN to Marshall?

C: No, Danny was born in Frankfort, and I think Benton (?) and Margie was too, I can't remember for sure.

D: So did he purchase the stock yard here?

C: No, his dad owned it. It was out along the railroad and cemetery.

D: So what was his dad's name?

C: Walter, Walter Richardson.

D: Did he own stock yards around in different towns?

C: I think he leased this one from the railroad. Then his dad left to run another stock yard someplace else.

D: So was your husband the general manager here?

C: No, he was working for his dad.

D: I know my dad and my father-in-law both thought so much of Fores. They just thought he was a great person and I know Eleanor's dad bought cattle from there.

C: Oh yeah, that was his life, he loved it. He would clean the floor, and liked doing all that. Danny was born there, that boy had a helluva life. He got polio and Dr. Illyes would come to the house a check on him, he was one of the old fashioned doctors. And then Margie was born, and Danny had that polio, and I think the good Lord was just watching over him because when he graduated school he went up to Danville and went to the Junior College up there. And they had a dormitory there that he lived in. Then one night we got a call that he had been in an accident and by the time we got there, he had died.

D: That was in Danville?

C: Yes, we did get to see him, but he really didn't know us. He died just a short time after we got there. And I told Rich, while we were here (in Danville), let's go and clean out his room. So we got his things out before the funeral. Oh and Margie, I said to Rich, the hardest part, we called Mr. Bush and told him he had died but asked him to not tell Margie. So we picked her up and she was just "full of it" and I never saw brother and sister closer than they were. They would always be talking when it was bedtime and Rich would tell them "if you two don't get quiet I will come in there", they were just so close. Anyway after Danny passed and we called Mr. Bush and said we would tell her when we got home. So when she got into the car she asked how Danny was and (she was a freshman in high school) I told her we would tell her when we got home. I thought she was going to have a nervous breakdown, they were so close.

D: I know that had to be a rough time. Our two kids can't get along but they can't get along without each other either.

C: I wanted to have seven kids, my mother died when my youngest sister was two, my aunt and uncle, that was my dad's brother, he had a confectionary store and they lived above the store, and my dad let them take the baby, they had been married for years and didn't have any children.

D: How old were you at the time that your mother died?

C: Oh, there were picturesI would have been five ..and I had two younger sisters. So my aunt and uncle took the baby, (inaudible)

D: Connie, when you came to Marshall do you know what year that would have been?

C: I can't really recall exactly what year that was.

D: When you came to Marshall, it was obviously a new town for you, what was your first impression of Marshall?

C: Well, I didn't like it at first, Rich knew a lot of people, but then there was two couples we made friends with, and we just got along really well.

D: What was there about Marshall that you didn't really like at first?

C: Well, right off the bat, Danny got sick with polio, and then we got to know and like Dr. Illyes. I think Danny was five then. We like him so much because he would just drop by and see how Danny was, he was such a good doctor.

D: From when you came to Marshall to now, what do you think are the most important changes that have taken place?

C: Oh, I don't think the people are as friendly as what we had come from. You go down to the Legion and (inaudible) Of course Rich was familiar with Marshall since he had opened the stock yard here in Marshall.

D: When I think back to years ago, I think people sat on their front porches and on Sunday afternoons they would go out and visit people and that just doesn't happen anymore.

C: I know it and I think it's getting worse now.

D: I agree.

C: You have to be somebody with money or prestige to get friends. I don't mean to be snobbish. But you know, way back, Rich and I got to know Ginny and Omer Shawler and Kate and Bill Meehling...I don't know how we got to be friends with them...but we have remained friends for years. Seems like people just don't usually stay friends for a long time. We used to have parties...we had the big house, so we always had the party house. We would go down to the Legion on Saturday nights....that reminds me, have you heard anything about Ginny and Omer Shawler?

D: Well I heard that she fell and broke her hip and I heard that he also fell.

C: He fell and they must have been holding hands and then she fell. She hadn't been well and they were holding hands and when he fell, she did too.

D: Were they at home?

C: No, they were at church.

D: Well, you kinda touched on the things that I was going to ask next... I know you have been a great person and a strong supporter to St Mary's Church here in Marshall ...

C: Well, I came to that church in 1993. And I got involved in the church.

D: Yes, you sure have been.

C: I don't think the (inaudible) was as active then as they are now. They do so much good. I just can't do anything right now ...I'm in this chair...I broke a bone here ...and that's why I'm in this wheel chair. Right now I can't go to church or cook meals or anything.

D: But Connie, over the years, you have made your mark, and that's the important thing.

C: They go in there and have yard sales, have fund raisers and ask for money contributions, and fix dinners, I haven't been to church in a long time.

D: The Guy Upstairs knows why.

D: Well, Connie I have sure enjoyed visiting with you and I think people in the future will enjoy reading or hearing this oral history. I'll just ask you one last question: Let say you went back over to France or Germany, how would you tell people over there what Marshall is like? Would you want to live here?

C: Well, you have to live here to know. But we have loved Marshall. I think people are friendly...well, not at first ... but little by little we got acquainted with people and stayed close friends with them ever since we met.