

A Critical War Time Experience in My Life

I am a senior citizen living in the Hallmark Residence in Battery Park. My life has had unexpected pleasures and surprises to put it mildly. I was a War Bride. My husband was in military service. We spent a short honeymoon in Florida before he got notice that he was being sent overseas to Europe with the 8th Air Force Bomber Squadron. I went home to live with my parents once again.

I wasn't a rich girl and didn't want my parents to have to continue to support me. I was told by a friend that a certain firm was hiring people. I was told where to go for an interview. I went there and was surprised to be interviewed by an army officer. He told me I was hired and would be called in a few weeks and told where and when to report. He kept my references. A few weeks went by and no call came. They said to be patient and a call would come very shortly. They were checking and interviewing all my references in person. When the call came, I was told to go to the Woolworth Building, on Broadway, and go to a firm called Kellex Corporation (a division of Kellogg Co.)

When I went to Kellex, I was told that my office was called Manhattan Engineer Project, which wasn't listed in the lobby directory.

My boss was an attorney and an Intelligence Officer. He didn't wear an army uniform. I worked with and for him. We handled security passes for scientists traveling to firms throughout the United States and to universities for discussions with professors about their special knowledge-only that. I wasn't a science major in high school or college and didn't understand the scientific information on the passes.

When I went to the ladies room, I was immediately cornered and asked an important question – Is your boss married? I always disappointed them by telling them “yes,” and that he lived in Brooklyn with his wife.

One winter morning, after a snowstorm, my father had an experience trying to bring me my boots. He knew the Kellex name, but not where, exactly, I worked. I got a message that he was in the lobby and had to go downstairs to identify him. He gave me my boots but was not allowed to go upstairs to my office.

One day, General Leslie Groves, the man who was in charge of the entire Manhattan Project, came to our office. After he left to return to Washington, we discovered that he had forgotten to take his briefcase. My

boss was awakened during the night, the briefcase was locked onto his arm, and he took a train to Washington to return the briefcase.

In August of 1945, when the Atomic Bombs were dropped on Japan, there by ending World War II, I realized what my office had been working on. We went down to the street to celebrate our victory.

After the bombs were dropped, my boss finally wore his army uniform every day. At the subway station where he bought his newspaper every morning, the shop owner said in shock – “Now you’re going into the army?”

My husband had returned to the United States from England and was being sent across the country to participate, with General Doolittle, in the invasion of Japan. He got as far as Deming, New Mexico when the bombs were dropped and the invasion was not necessary.

My daughter has said to me – “You kept Dad alive in World War II.”

WAR DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON


7 August 1945

TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE MANHATTAN DISTRICT PROJECT

Today the whole world knows the secret which you have helped us keep for many months. I am pleased to be able to add that the warlords of Japan now know its effects better even than we ourselves.

The atomic bomb which you have helped to develop with high devotion to patriotic duty is the most devastating military weapon that any country has ever been able to turn against its enemy. No one of you has worked on the entire project or known the whole story. Each of you has done his own job and kept his own secret and so today I speak for a grateful nation when I say congratulations and thank you all.

I hope you will continue to keep the secrets you have kept so well. The need for security and for continued effort is fully as great now as it ever was. We are proud of every one of you.


Robert P. Patterson,
Under Secretary of War.