



Skirts Of Navy Blue: A Memoir of World War II

Jill B. Carlson

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As far as I was concerned, World War II was a snap despite blackouts, rationing, and no nylons-just tan leg makeup-"Guaranteed not to come off" . . . the hem of your dress, the chair you sat on, or your date's trouser legs when dancing. In a burst of patriotism, I joined the WAVES-the Navy's version of the WAACs (only with cuter uniforms), and met some great new friends including "Candy", a movie starlet, and Howard Hughes who I thought was a radio repairman (I didn't catch his last name) The trip from Los Angeles to Hunter College in New York was a revelation; troop trains do not have dining cars-you march to various "mess halls" from wherever the train halts. I also discovered that the subway does not run from Chicago to NYC. Candy made boot camp a pleasure. We got to read her fan mail, and her family's chauffeur delivered weekly goodies from Schraft's and Bergdorf Goodman's (her three roommates were the best dressed-lingerie-wise-recruits in the Navy-and the only ones to gain weight inspite of all that marching) . She also gave me the opportunity of turning down her invitation to have lunch at the Stork club with "little" Gloria Vanderbilt, and see "Carmen Jones", a big Broadway hit. I chose instead to lead a gaggle of misguided recruits in an almost futile attempt to find the Empire State building. Finally, the Navy, overlooking my southern accent and a tendency to address pilots as "honey" (Take a wave- off, honey), gave me one of their coveted billets as a Control Tower Operator and sent me to Atlanta, Georgia, for further training, There, I learned to drive a jeep, "fly" a plane (courtesy of the Link trainer) and to be careful where I sat on public streetcars -Jim Crow was alive and well. Assigned to a small control tower in Corpus Christi, Texas, I met a tall, lanky "radio repairman" who laughed at almost anything I said, and was my good buddy during some dramatic changes in my life. His visits ended

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