

Transcript of an interview conducted 14 January 2018

Interviewees: CATHLEEN ALEXANDER (CA) and DUNCAN BARRETT (DB)

Interviewer: JAREK ZABA (JZ)

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**[0:00:00] JZ: Can you start by just saying your name, your date of birth, and your place of birth? Is that ok?**

CA: Yes.

**[0:00:05] JZ: Yep, if you could just..**

CA: What do you want first?

**[0:00:06] JZ: Sorry?**

CA: What do you want first?

**[0:00:09] JZ: Er, your name.**

CA: Cathleen Winifred Alexander.

**[0:00:13] JZ: Lovely, errr, and your date of birth.**

CA: First of August 1921.

**[0:00:19] JZ: Lovely, erm, and your place of birth?**

CA: [Felixstowe], Suffolk.

**[0:00:24] JZ: Lovely, lovely. Erm and just for the tape I'll just say that we're here at your home in Chesham, err, what is the date. It's Sunday the 15th of January.**

DB: Something like that. er 14th

**[0:00:36] JZ: Sunday the 14th of January and Duncan if you could say the same. Your name, your place of birth, and your date of birth.**

DB: Right. Er, my name is Duncan Barrett, I was born in London on the first of January 1983.

**[0:00:48] JZ: Lovely. Ok, erm, can, could we start by erm just talking about when you first, er, were asked to work at Bushy Park. Why, why, why, why, what were you doing and erm what were you asked to do?**

CA: Well I was in the ATS, and we were working with the Americans in SHAEF. Supreme Headquarters.

**[0:01:13] JZ: And, and.**

CA: I'm trying to think what we lived in. We must have been in huts there I suppose really.

**[0:01:24] JZ: Hmmm, and..**

CA: I mean we were in barracks up in Yorkshire wherever we went we were in barracks, but there weren't barracks at erm, I don't remember them in Bushy Park. Have you photographs of before the war in Bushy Park or?

**[0:01:42] JZ: Erm, there are, I, I, I don't actually, I would like to see it, erm, I mean, erm, yeah, my understand, my understanding it was just a Royal Park, erm, for, for general public use, until that, until that point, until the war when they, when they, reappropriated it as.**

CA: You see everybody knew about Hampton Court and all the other places, Kew gardens and all the rest if you lived up north, nobody had ever heard of Bushy Park.

**[0:02:09] JZ: Right, right, yeah.**

CA: So it wasn't a tourist attraction.

**[0:02:14] JZ: Of course, no, no, no, erm. And you said you were with the ATS, what is the ATS sorry?**

CA: What does ATS.

DB: Auxiliary Territorial Service, it's the women's army.

**[0:02:26] JZ: Ok, ok. And, and, and so what, what, what was your, what was your role, what were you?**

CA: I was er, I was in signals, Royal Corp. I was taken into the Royal Corp of Signals, a number of us were we were actually on signals working with in the women's. I wanted, when I joined ATS, I wanted to learn to drive. The queen had just learnt to drive. Um. [Laughter] And I was, I wanted to learn to drive, but I was only five foot two and they didn't want people five foot, they wanted you to be erm tall enough to be able to. I could have driven a car but wouldn't have been any good with anything bigger and so I was, I didn't even get interviewed as just I was ruled out on the fact that I was only five foot two.

**[0:03:22] JZ: My.**

CA: Put me in signals.

**[0:02:24] JZ: And, and what does, what did your work in signals involve? Tell me about sort of, er, a normal day, er, working on the signals.**

CA: Well. If you go into the, I mean you can only have non-fighting jobs anyway. So you largely teleprinter operatives or telephone operatives or drivers or something of that sort. But I was accepted straight away into, into signals and trained. I chose to train to be a teleprinter operator. And you then work, I was actually working in the Royal Corp of Signals, just on normal duties in the Royal Corp of Signals. And most of the time I was up in Yorkshire.

**[0:04:13] JZ: Ok.**

CA: In Leeds part of the time and in York. And then I, you had to volun, they did a sort of, you see when I joined, I joined in I think 1941, and then they wanted the second front to open because the Russians were under, they were. And they said we've got to start the second front. And we had a, it wasn't Montgomery it was a one of his erm people he sent out to tea. And I remember him coming over and saying the fact was that they found day to day send. You see to start with when you went into the ATS they said you will never

be sent abroad, and then they said you wouldn't be sent abroad unless you were over 21 and the majority of us were not over 21. And they sent people round trying to persuade us to reapply, you know to say that we agreed to go, being sent. Only to the second front of course, they couldn't send you off to some other part of the world. And I remember this chap coming and erm, saying there would be no gay parties in Paris and evenings in Vienna. You will just have to work and all the rest of it. And he said, which tickled us quite a lot I tell you, we, coz we got, by then we'd got the [safe], bounties with the flaming cord of liberation and all the rest of it. You have the honour to wear the cord of, the sword of liberation, I charge you not to throw it aside. And we all rushed over to company offices. [Laughing] But it was only to go to Europe really, but they did, and they sent people after that they sort of sent them to erm, before that they hadn't, you couldn't go abroad. Because there was a chap called Gary Allegan, I think he was, an Irish name. And you could write up to him if you were in the forces and you had a problem and he would sort of deal with it. And I wrote to them and said that I wanted to go abroad and they wouldn't let me go because I was under 21, the next thing I knew, I had been posted to, I think it was, that was the time they told me I couldn't learn to drive because I was only five foot two. And when they sent for me and said I was going to go to signals, but I would do all the normal duties in signals, which was, it's erm, it niggles you if you know there are things you are not allowed to do. And you immediately want to do them.

**[0:07:17] JZ: Forbidden fruits, yeah, that sort of thing, yeah, yeah.**

CA: So I went into the [north ground] signals in York.

**[0:07:25] Yep.**

CA: And then I was in Leeds and West Riding District Signals and I was in a private billet. I used to come home to my father and mother in Portsmouth, grogging around, and all the air raids and I was in, was in um, a private billet up in Leeds in Roundhay, near Roundhay Park. And it was really as easy a life as I had before I joined up, it was. It's strange the way you think you're doing something very noble and actually end up doing something very easy.

**[0:08:00] JZ: Right.**

CA: Coz it's, it's erm.

DB: Important though. It was important though. I mean it was important for the war, what you were doing.

CA: Well they only saw what they wanted. They wanted so many operators for this and that and they sort of, they look around to see what they can get and of course they kept coming across a unit that was very good and then find that half of them were ATS and under 21 and so they had to say well you can, we can say you can do this now if you. It's erm, it's a tail working the dog, isn't it really. But it was quite. I thoroughly enjoyed the time in signals because I, we, even in Leeds, had erm had pigeons. And we had to feed the pigeons and send messages by pigeon. They did the things thoroughly really. But, erm, You had to, we were then asked to volunteer to go overseas. But you had to be over 21 and I was over 21 by then. And erm. So we were sent down to Bushy Park.

**[0:09:14] JZ: What, what year were you sent to Bushy Park? Do, do you remember? Or how old were you?**

CA: It must have been 1943 because it was, I joined in 1941. But I was in Leeds and York, and then I was in London. And then I went back up to Yorkshire again. You move around a lot in signals really. And erm. And then of course it was the second front. But when I was in York, the second time, we had Americans working with us and they were, we were beginning to, we didn't really want them.

**[0:09:57] JZ: Right, why not?**

CA: I think they complicated things really. It was er, there weren't an awful lot of them. Although there were quite a few in York. And, you either but the public liked them of course. But if you, you have, you sort of view the outside world differently when you're in uniform. And then, I liked it up in Scotland, I was in Edinburgh for a while and I liked it up there. It's erm, I don't know, I think it's the fact that you know you can go anywhere, you can be sent anywhere. We objected to not being able to do certain jobs.

**[0:10:49] JZ: Do, do, do you remember when the Americans first joined the war effort?**

CA: Erm, well I joined up in 1941 and I went up to Edinburgh, we were outside Edinburgh about 7 or 8 and it was terribly cold. I could, I can't remember the name of the place. It was a big barracks. And it was winter, and you had to do, all of a sudden, you had to do. One of the things was you had to do night duty. And the night duty was at every hour you had to go all round the camp, pulling all the chains in the latrines so that they wouldn't freeze up, and you would spend the night doing this, every hour. You have the funniest jobs to do actually, and erm. Then I was sent, because they said I was too short, I thought I was going to train as a driver but they said that no I couldn't even apply because I was only, I was two inches too short. And they, gave me a proficiency test I think they were, and they came up with a, suggested I went into signal. And I agreed to that. They were very, I was a volunteer, I hadn't been, they hadn't when I joined, they were, later on they started, you had to, women had to go and register and they got called up. But when you were a volunteer they, they're conscious of the fact that you volunteered and that there are certain. And I don't think that they were allowed to do certain things to volunteers without asking them first. It was, I liked the ATS actually. And then, we, really it was quite funny because you have, er, well what would it be called? It's erm, erm, but the regiment or whatever they are, and they're people who go round and sort out problems. Erm. They also go around talking about current affairs. There were supposed to come round and we would have explanations of government things and all the rest of it. But it was, it was a corp in itself of people. They were, they were all people who are used to settling industrial dis. Because we went on, we went on strike in York. And the reason was that we had WAC officers, and we didn't like WAC officers.

**[0:13:53] JZ: What's a WAC officer sorry?**

CA: A woman, woman officer.

**[0:13:57] JZ: Oh ok.**

CA: And erm, we were quite happy to have the, to just be, you know we knew them. But we didn't treat. I mean, if you had a, if you were on signals duty and the signals officer happened to be a WAC, well that didn't matter. When they started putting them on to do kit inspections and all sorts of things like this we didn't object. We didn't like that at all.

DB: These were Americans.

CA: Sorry.

DB: American women, these? Were they American?

CA: No, no.

DB: No these were, right ok

CA: British. Erm, I'm, I never, we had nothing to do with the WACs, although I've got, we got on well with the WACs of course in Bushy Park. They were separate but we got on fine with them. Didn't have any trouble, but, you got a certain number of officers, who came in from, well I suppose the ordinary ranks were working class really, and we objected to somebody who came in and suddenly started telling us to do

things that we had been doing for years. And there wasn't, I very rarely came across them apart from the fact that you had doctors of course, and people like that. And some of them were ok, but if you got a bad one, and so in York, and it was a silly thing, like, we were in huts, in double bunks in huts. And that was, in York. I'm trying to think what the barracks was called, it's a big barracks, in York and we had double bunks. And you have to do a certain number of duties, normally. But signals normally don't have to do any of these duties, you don't have to, erm, do any fatigues or anything like those. And erm, things were going along alright but we, had to do, you had to clean up your own hut, and your own, after your own bunk and all the rest of it. But they were making, they had a certain number of ATS who worked doing fatigues, and they were sweeping off outside, and this sort of thing. And they erm, I can't remember what the problem was. I know that the problem started with night duty. And, a shift of ATS came off night duty and erm, they should have had breakfast ready for them but it wasn't ready and they had to go to the cookhouse and get to breakfast. And then they, the huts should have been cleaned, swept and whatnot, and it hadn't been. And there were, there was an ATS squad which did these jobs, but it had been taken away. And it had been taken away, because a group of women ATS officers had taken a, were living in a requisitioned house and they wanted their house cleaned and so they took the fatigues from the camp and said come and clean. And erm, so we came off duty, I happened to come off duty, and erm, the er, nothing on for breakfast and all the rest of it and we were supposed to then clean out the, the. And erm, so three of us, no two of us, said we're not going to do it. And we had an er ATS officer, who then charged us of mutiny.

**[0:18:05] JZ: Wow, that's quite extreme.**

CA: But the thing was that we there was this. You had erm, this towards the end of the war, they started sending lecturers to come round and give you lectures. It was to help you when you were, we were all starting to be demobbed. And erm, they were interesting, you could ask them all sorts of questions about, they tended to be largely teachers I think. And we had several that we knew well, and erm, we used to try and think up difficult questions for them. And it just so happened that I went, they picked two people to come, and just, we just said we're not doing it, it's, not we're not clearing up all this. So we were summoned to company office. And we had a woman who had been in the ATS before the war, did start in the ATS before the war. And she had erm, she was a real barratt room lawyer and she said, just refuse to answer their questions, don't get involved in an argument. Just say "I don't wish to answer that question." So we just stood there and said, "I don't want to answer that question." And so, she left very annoyed and the next thing was we were going to be, we had to go to company office, and I think they thought we were going to be burnt at the stake, or something. [Background laughter] And you really, we had this chap who came round and did this ABCA, Army Bureau, Army Bureau of Current Affairs, that was it. And he came up and he said, erm, that he knew us well, and he knew that we were intelligent and all the rest. And really it was all a waste of time, and it was all sort of brushed under the carpet. But we never got that during the war, this was all when it was coming to demobs and [inaudible].

**[0:20:15] JZ: Right.**

CA: I can't, just sort of atmosphere.

DB: Do you remember when you were told to go down to Bushy Park? Do you remember what it was like going down there?

CA: Well first of all, I was in York and I was sent down, we were sent down to erm. We were living in a requisitioned house in Buckingham Palace Road. And we were working on night duty at the war office. But they were keen, it was because Bushy Park wasn't finished, it, the, I mean the accomodation wasn't there, so though we were doing just helping out, doing something, they was always under pressured, all of us. And we went there, they were underground. And erm, we used to do work in this [inaudible] there. And erm, then we were suddenly told we were going down to Bushy Park. And erm, it was just an empty field really. And there were huts and things. And erm, but there was a signal office. And so we went there and, and there was a separate area because there weren't any erm, [inaudible] so the teleprinter operators were all

British. But there were Americans doing other things, erm, quite a lot of them. And er, it was quite funny at Bushy Park because they started sending over these planes that, you know, they're just, just fly flying bombs really, and they sudden, and you have to wait until you'd can't hear them, and you know it's going to stop somewhere.

DB: The V1s.

CA: Well they were, I don't think, they were that particularly dangerous, except we got a lot of windows broken. But the things were, they came round to find out if anything had happened, and you'd get windows broken and all the rest of it. And the first evening that happened, there were quite a number of windows broken. And then a couple of days later we found that all the WACs were wearing purple hearts, because if they'd had a bit of cut from picking up a bit of, they immediately went and applied for a purple heart [laughter].

**[0:22:37] JZ: So what erm, what were, the the signals that you were working on, what were they signalling? You know. What was the purpose of, of, of, of your work, and your, your, your job?**

CA: Well you see, you. How do you mean?

**[0:22:53] JZ: Errr. I so, just, just, just what you mean by, by, by signals. Erm, as in is this to help the, the planes, is it for?**

CA: No, the Royal Corp of Signals, you'll have, you could be a telephonist or you could be a teleprinter, a wireless operator, all sorts of ways it's just. No I did have some, did have a book about..

**[0:23:24] JZ: So it's communication, is, is the, is the.**

CA: Sorry.

**[0:23:28] JZ: Communication is the, is the, is the.**

CA: It's communication, yes.

**[0:23:30] JZ: Yes, yes, yes, so it's, it's, it's.**

CA: But there were certain duties that the women weren't allowed to do. They weren't allowed to go into battle so nothing [inaudible] [sore truth]. Erm, but you were treated just like the men really.

**[0:23:47] JZ: Sure.**

CA: On duties, but there were very few men teleprinter operators, or wireless operators, because they were more elected to be on, erm, more like duties. I mean we didn't go, we worked in the signal office, you either worked.

**[24:08] JZ: How many people would have worked in the signals office alongside yourself?**

CA: Well it depends. If you were in the war office there were loads of people on teleprinters. But I started out in West Riding and they had taken over a farmhouse. We worked in the kitchen. We just had two teleprinters in the kitchen and they got a row of four phones where they had telephonists. But most of the signals that you were getting was Private Smith is being posted to somewhere else and arrange to meet him and things like this. But if you were a – got sent to York you would be getting things about troop movements. But they were just passing on information really. But we had pigeons we had to feed. You – and funnily enough they had a competition – they had – in Yorkshire a lot of people keep pigeons, farmers

keep them. And they used to get it – I was in the private billet with a Mr and Mrs Sykes. And they used to get the local people – paper and the people writing it up and saying I've kept pigeons and why are they doing this and all the rest of it. It's – I was sort of half in the community and half out because every now and again we'd be sent forth to go to York to some parade, we had to polish our buttons and go. But the rest of the time we were just working up at this house. And we all lived in – there was a council estate that we were all billeted in this council estate. And I was with Mr and Mrs Sykes. And Mr Sykes had been in the army during the First World War. And he'd loved it. And he used to polish my buttons, I was always the pride of the regiment when I was there because of my buttons were - everything was clean and tidy. And most people had to do this – they just had to cope with this. But we were all billeted on this private estate. Well it was a public estate. But I – [Hollingham] Park it was called. And it was quite – it was a big park in Leeds. A great big park. And it's – there were loads – it's difficult to explain because all the farms had got people billeted on them. It was – but they – it must have taken – you never think about it but the organisation of it all must have been absolutely incredible.

**[27:12] JZ: And at Bushy Park did you work closely with the Americans? Or did you work just in a team of British people?**

CA: Well there was a women's cape. There was a huge part – there were two areas you came in. You came along the road – there was the sentry box. 'Halt or I'll shoot' [Laughs].

**JZ: They would say that as you approached it?**

CA: Well we used to – they'd just say halt, who goes there? And you say friend, and they say advance friend and give the password, that's it. But what the Americans – halt or I'll shoot. [Laughs].

**[27:57] JZ: They like a bit of drama.**

CA: They mixed with the men. They shared had separate accommodation from the men. But they wasn't – we got on quite well with the WACs because we ate – all ate in the same mess and things like this. Oddly enough the commanding officer of the American WACs was Lady Alexander. She had been baptised Lady, that's why her name was Lady. I wasn't an Alexander then so it didn't - but since then when I've been showing [things to christen], that's Lady Alexander. But we go on alright with her really. And they – I don't think the men had a lot of – not the signals men. Because the wireless operators were always separate. You had to have a signals room where you have several teleprinter operators, all going – linked to different things. And you have – when we were at Bushy Park they also had an editing section. And they used to get – the [inaudible] ships as they called them, situation reports from war correspondence. And they had to put them into – then they had a coding department they passed them to and put them into code. And then they received stuff. I had a friend who was in the editing section. And – but I was a teleprinter operator and I was officially a wireless operator, I had passed the test but I never did any duties as a wireless operators. I was always – sometimes taking messages by telephone – but nearly all my stuff was teleprinter work and most of it was in cipher. And you do it wherever you go, they can move you anywhere, they move you to the war office and it's always the same. You have – they're all using the same ciphers and all the rest of them. There's no problem about moving. Except you got a machine to move. And then you have – but the signals are always kept separate from – when you go to camp. Because we have dispatch riders who takes stuff by dispatch. And they come in the middle of the night and go in the middle of the night and things like that, but your separate unit – you don't usually get a signal company on it so it's always attached. And so the [inaudible] - so...

**[30:57] JZ: And it was mainly other British people that you were working alongside. Not so much the Americans.**

CA: Well I joined in 1941. And the Americans weren't even in the war then.

DB: But when you were at Bushy Park, there must have been a lot of Americans around there.

CA: Oh yes. Two thirds of them. Or more. The British – there were all nationalities.

DB: And did the British and the Americans mix a lot, or did they keep to themselves?

CA: Well you have a mess hall where everybody goes. It was the one for the men and – I don't think the men – yes, they did. We used to see the men – but it's more like a cafeteria, you went and got – you didn't have [inaudible] - helped yourselves to whatever you want. It was – and you know in the – I'd been in several army units and it [inaudible] mess tables [inaudible] - you go up and they put the meat in one, and the vegetables and then they give you – there's some other one, they give you some rice pudding or whatever it is. And then you come – when you go out those mess tins belonged to you. And you take them out and they would be a packet of water. And you could sort of wash them. But you could no way get them clean. We used to have to take them to the washrooms and wash them properly. But in the Americans they had a – hot water to put them in and somewhere to rinse them and somewhere to dry them and all the rest of it. It was – that's – so we were quite glad when we went to share with the Americans because we just used the American's equipment to -

**[32:50] JZ: They had much better facilities?**

CA: Oh yes. They always did. But – and when we were in – I was in – when I was in France we were dreams. And I can't think who came round to see us on the American high command. And he asked the British if there was anything he could send, he'd been [inaudible] wanted to send them a present. And he said to the men what would you like us to send? And they said tea! We're sick of coffee. So he sends – apparently – we were kept waiting for this tea to come. But we then discovered that tea had been sent but they had put it in the coffee machine and boiled it up and it wasn't drinkable.

[All laugh]

**[33:47] JZ: Oh dear. But was there – because I've heard about how the Americans had almost a life of luxury on the base because they had – they wanted to make it a home from home sort of thing. Was there any resentment towards the Americans for having all this sort of much better facilities and all of that?**

CA: No. Because they had the PX.

**[34:10] JZ: What's the PX sorry?**

CA: Well it's their NAAFI. We had a NAAFI where you could go and get chewing gum and Woodbines and things. But you could get all sorts of things. You could deodorant and shampoo for your hair. And they let us use them. They were open to the ATS. And I think they were all open to the men too. They could get – we didn't have any trouble between the Americans – not in SHAEF. I don't know about other units. But I don't think so because they were always bending backwards to – and when you went on leave, after you got your ticket to go home – your railway ticket – you went round to the cookhouse and they say how long you going for? How many packets of biscuits would you like? And my mother used to say, what have you brought? And my father was in the navy. But he was looking forward to me bringing the American stuff down from SHAEF.

**[35:10] JZ: So you were to your advantage really.**

CA: They were very generous, the Americans. And they did their best, you couldn't fault them on that at all. And I don't remember any trouble. Any trouble at all with the – in SHAEF.



DB: Was there any romance? Between the signals girls and the Americans? Was there any romance between them?

CA: Well there weren't any Americans in signals. It was a British -

DB: But you would see them around them. There would be opportunities.

**[35:41] JZ: Did you socialise with them?**

CA: They had separate huts where they [pause] But their huts, I don't know whether their beds were the same as ours or whether they had different beds but I never went to it – we didn't go to each other's – but I know they had dressing gowns. And we didn't have dressing gowns. We had our new pajamas. I know that they had maybe certain facilities for washing their hair and things that we didn't – but it didn't bother us in the least.

**[36:13] JZ: Did you socialise with them? Did you mix on a social level, the Americans?**

CA: Well I've got photographs. Now with the WACs – I never made any close friends with WACs. But no, if we went somewhere – I mean you share a table with them in the dining hall or things like that. And – but they didn't have any signals staff there. I mean if you had been a shorthand typist and there were shorthand typists in both, you could have mixed. But the signals used to keep themselves to themselves. And [pause] and there were – I don't remember any trouble at all with the Americans.

**[37:03] And as Duncan written about, lots of local women were very interested in the American men. Were you – and they used to come and visit the base and things like this – were you aware of that happening? The local population sort of mixing with the Americans.**

CA: Well when I joined up I was – the first place I was sent to – apart from doing initial training which I went up to Scotland. And we shared the camp with the Royal Scots. [Laughs]. And that was quite a funny experience. But I mean we were on foreign soil, really, but when we came up from England into Scotland. And we – not far from our camp there was a prisoner of war camp. With Germans. And we used to sent out on route marches and I remember one route march when we were going – somebody had asked – had heard of some beautiful area, and said could we go there, and they said yes OK we could go there. Then all of a sudden we were told to - about 10 - and we found we were getting into a German prisoner of war camp. And there was – there were Germans prisoners of war there. But they were quite friendly. [Laughs]. [inaudible] the ATS, they were shouting. It was really – there was a comic side to the war. You get funny situations really. So we had the – that was only time I saw German soldiers was up in Scotland. We had quite a lot of them there. And I think several of them escaped and it was – and their – we didn't have any contact with the WACs at all. I mean apart from the fact we shared the eating places and things like this. And they – I would have shared the same latrines and everything. It was only – they had their own offices and their own – they worked differently, all of the – there were a certain number of ATS who were secretaries to American officers and things. They – but there wasn't any racial problem at all. And in fact we had two negro [pause] ATS. And they – when we went into town used to try and find – they avoided going to any of the American places there. They didn't – the American had the – they did – when we went – at the camp we were fine – when we split up and went into town, you tend to split up – the ATS went to anywhere. They – a lot of churches round – cafeterias and things like this. And we went – go anywhere. The Americans were a bit selective, but they were welcome at any of the places but it's -

**[40:06] JZ: And at Bushy Park, would you go into Kingston?**

CA: Oh yes. There's Bentalls there. And I had – I've got photographs [pause] of Bushy Park. Because we – I worked in a team in the – and the chap I worked with was called [long pause] I've forgotten, it was a foreign name. And I think he was in [pause] anyway I got on very – [Bickelhaulpt] – Corporal [Bickelhaulpt]. And

there was also – I wonder where Bob put them. Because they're interesting. And they actually – I'll see about that later. But anyway we [pause] – this chap, he was – I don't know – the majority – you see you could get people like cowboys and all sorts of people and I could never work out – I mean the men were called up on an age and when your date of birth was. Corporal [Bickelhaupt] must have been about 40 I think. He was like a businessman. But there was some quite young people. I don't – there didn't – I never could quite work out why he was in the – and I've got photographs of him – he was ever so nice. And his wife had a great desire to have some English leather gloves. And he kept – he said to me could I tell him where to buy them. And I said well you can still find em, shops and department stores – they were still open. But you had to have clothing coupons. And of course – where could he get clothing coupons? And I said well you have to be British to have clothing coupons. And then I thought that [Kinta] had said to me if I could buy certain thing - he'll be able to get them and she would give me the coupons for them. And I grew quite fond of this chap, he wanted to please his wife. And I said I'll find out how many you needed – 2 coupons to have a pair of leather gloves. So I got [Kinta] and I promised [Kinta] that I would get her some nylons if she could – so she – gave them these and he went off [highly] and then he found them. Oh yes, his wife had been absolutely over the moon. She had – he had sold – he said that when he had gone to England, she wrote straight away and said try to get me some gloves. And then she found that he went into the one of the shops in Edinburgh and tried to buy these gloves. I said well have you got clothing coupons? He said what are clothing coupons? And I said we don't – in the ATS you got about 8 a year and that was so you could buy some more stockings really. But you – anyway it was – but it was a very friendly relationship in the services. Actually very unusual to have any trouble.

**[43:47] JZ: And you mentioned earlier about tea dances in Kingston. Is that correct?**

CA: Sorry?

**JZ: Tea dances you mentioned.**

CA: They were in Kingston on Thames. They were in Bantalls. There's a Bantalls there – department store.

**[43:54] JZ: What would happen at these tea dances? Run me through them.**

CA: You'd go there and you'd have tea. You'd sit at a table and they'd bring you – well in peacetime they would bring you sandwiches and they would bring you - there would be a set thing and scones and you'd finish up with a plate of cakes. But you had to pay in Bantalls to go to [inaudible]. But it was a chance – I mean cakes were on the ration. So they were a treat to have but very few people – you didn't find servicepeople – it was the civilians who went to the tea dances. It was Bantalls trying to keep their place in the town really.

**[44:39] JZ: And how many people would attend one of these dances? Typically.**

CA: There would be elderly people mainly. Very often women because women would dance together, it was all the – it was all very civilised. They were just trying to keep the flag flying really, Bantalls, so they could -

**[45:02] JZ: And you would go yourself and enjoy them?**

CA: Oh yes. In fact I did go to one where – I think a group of us went to one. And you – they treated everybody the same. And you just tried to keep on going. [Pause]. It was funny then because when I came down to Worthing, I'd never heard of Bantalls before and they had one in Worthing of course so I felt quite at home in Bantalls. But that's gone now. I don't know what happened to it.

**[45:37] JZ: Do you remember much else about Kingston? Any other memories or things you associate with the town?**

CA: We were outside the town and it was about 5 minutes walk into Kingston. In fact I saw more of Kingston – I had a friend, Ginger. And she [pause] they wanted – we were in Bushy Park and they wanted volunteers to move down to Portsmouth. They were starting another camp down – this was in preparation for the invasion of course. And Ginge was set up in Kingston and she said I'm going to volunteer for that. And she disappeared for about six weeks and came back again. She came back engaged to be married. Just on that six week – married a glider pilot. Now what was I talking about? Oh the – what am I telling you about?

**[46:46] JZ: In Kingston. Your sort of memories of Kingston.**

CA: Yes but there's – you were asking if I knew Kingston. Well we were in camps and the woman's camp and there was the men's camp and there were other American – and it was a huge area, all covered in separate camps. Within the big camp – and you tended when you went in to Kingston just to find one of the – because there was – there were plenty of churches round - counties who invited people, you could go there and have a chat with people and things. And [pause] – and there was the PX and there was the NAAFI. And the PX was very good – it did all sorts of shampoos and things that we – you couldn't get in the NAAFI, you just got tea and chocolate really. But you only got a chocolate ration. You had to have chocolate coupons.

**[47:57] JZ: So the PX and the NAAFI, these are sort of stores for goods that you couldn't get?**

CA: Yes. You could get nylons but we never did get anyone nylons because you wouldn't wear them anyway. I mean we had to wear our stockings anyway. But you could buy makeup and things like this. And they also had – and you could get American cigarettes. There was a tobacco ration. In the army you got something like that 60 cigarettes or something like this. And I know that – because I used to smoke then. And I – you had to take – you would something like a hundred but you had 40 of them in Woodbines. You couldn't get them in [layers] as I wanted. But I only puffed them anyway. I don't think I smoked them properly. It was – if you had anything on the ration you tried to get it simply because it was on the ration.

**[49:02] JZ: And in the end a lot of British women – British young women ended up becoming romantically involved with American soldiers. Certainly in Kingston that was the case. Did you know about that happening? Were you aware of any that sort of thing?**

CA: Did I know about...

**JZ: British women becoming romantically involved with American officers. It was quite a common-**

CA: No. Not in signals. But you had to be in the royal corps of signals – it was really just one of the units that wasn't – you didn't get accidentally posted into signals. [Pause]. We never had – we did have signal officers – we didn't have – when I was at Bushy Park because we have a – yes we had Lieutenant Felix and he was really very funny. Because they had some sort of private, I always remember him, he was a comic. And he did occasional supervising of the teleprinter room. But it didn't involve signal knowledge, it was sort of keeping order and all rest of it. And he would answer the phone – and I remember him trying to phone – I'll get that information for you, sir. And he couldn't get it. And he kept getting onto the British thing and in the end he was saying I'm – I'm talking to you by courtesy of the British telephone service. [Laughs]. I don't know – he was quite funny. There was a lot of [pause] – it was good tempered, sort of. I mean we would say what do you expect from yanks and things like that. But there was nothing – it was a very friendly

**[51:02] JZ: It was good natured, yeah.**

CA: I don't think there was ever any trouble at all.

**[51:10] JZ: Because this project that I'm working on is actually looking at the music in town as well. In the town of Kingston. Is music important to you at all? Has it been important? Were you listening to records at this time?**

CA: I did go through a period when I used to but I don't, no now because I'm deaf. And I can't hear music properly. There's certain notes I can't hear so I – it's unfortunate. I can't even recognise some tunes because I lose them – I think or that's something [inaudible] . But there's nothing they can do about it.

**[51:46] JZ: But at the time what sort of music did you enjoy?**

CA: At Bushy Park you could get – you came out of the – have you been to Bushy Park?

**JZ: I actually haven't no. Even though it's just down the road from me, but no.**

CA: Well there's a road that goes into – I mean it must cover quite a big area. And you could just come out – there was a signal box. And you had to sort of say where you were going. And you went out – you walk along the road, you could go to – there was a railway station. There was a bus station. There was a tube. And we used to go out in the evenings when I first went there, whenever we were free in the evenings we used to get the tube into [long pause] now what was the theatre? That had been turned into a dancehall. Now what was it? Covent Garden. And that was full and it was free to anybody in uniform and it was packed with French – everything, you went there. And this friend of mine, Ginge – there were a number of negroes used to go there. And some used to refuse – some of the girls used to refuse with – I think they were afraid of them more than anything else. But I know that Ginge said to me, if a negro asked you to dance, are you going to? And I said no I don't think so. I mean, if you didn't want to dance with a negro you didn't go where the negroes were. You went to another – so I said I hadn't really thought about it. Anyway she was one of these – if she believed something she was determined to do it. This negro came and asked her to dance and she was dancing with him and I said would you do it again? And she said he kept calling me missy. She didn't like being called missy.

**[54:10] JZ: What kind of music would be playing at these dances?**

CA: Oh great, we had great bands.

**JZ: Like jazz?**

CA: Everything. It was the beginning of jitterbugging. And we then got – you would get some of them at - the Americans, they would be doing almost demonstrations. We would all stand around and watch them. Because we were trying to do bits of jive and whatnot but not very successfully. But that was packed every evening.

**[54:40] JZ: So the Americans brought with them-**

CA: It was Covent Garden Theatre. Because we – you could go up and sit in the theatre boxes and watch the dancing if you wanted to. You didn't have to pay. You had to hand in your [hat] badge I think. And -

**[54:55] JZ: So with the dancing and the music the Americans actually brought with them some influences like the jive.**

CA: A lot of Americans used to go there, yes. But the Americans used to go to – there were nightclubs that were open and they used to have dancing there and things like that. And the NAAFI of course, but the NAAFI was more or less the Palais Glide and things like this. But we used to – no you could have a good time at Bushy Park going out in the evenings. And there were always free tickets to go to the theatres. They always had them at company office if you wanted to see any show. You could get a free ticket to go. But we

– the train took about 10 minutes from Covent - think we ended up in Victoria I think.

**[55:50] JZ: Do you ever – did you listen to American Armed Forces Radio at all? AFN? Do you remember that at all?**

CA: No, I don't.

**JZ: No that's fine. It's just one of the things that's come up.**

CA: You see if you'd – if you were in the NAAFI they'd just put on the BBC and whatever it is. I wasn't listening for it – I mean if I wanted to find it I expect I could have done. We had [pause] in our – one of the teams I was on in the teleprinter room – a girl called Connie who was black – she came from Liverpool. And she had a problem when we went into London – she didn't know whether to go – she didn't fit in to either the black – there were some canteens that was negro – a lot of negroes went to and things. And she didn't – she was really upset – she didn't feel at home in any of them. Either of them. She came out thinking well I'm glad to get out of that. And then – it was a – there wasn't normally any trouble as far as I was concerned. But then I felt able to go anywhere. But there were certain people who didn't – if they were Indian or African – they knew – how – where to go in England and when they were in mixed sort of – they found it difficult. I don't know about the WACs – they seemed to hang together when they went out. You'd see a party of them.

**[57:41] JZ: And did you ever buy records? Did you ever have a gramophone or anything to play records on?**

CA: Well I [long pause] we had a wind up gramophone in our hut. And I remember the people – we used to listen to – now maybe there were 4 coloured men. 4 men.

**[58:14] JZ: A singing group?**

CA: Yes.

**JZ: I'm not sure off the top of my head. I'm sure I could find out.**

CA: It was the Inkspots. And there was another one that we – oh, we quite liked. We weren't that fussy about – but we had in the camp we had a dance band. It was there all the time. And there were – [once or twice] a week there was a – and you never paid of course. There was a – and they had a bar – strictly limited to the NAAFI of course. And we had stage shows that came down as [part of] – I mean it was a nice posting to get to the -

**[59:05] JZ: So this band at the base, they would host a regular sort of dance or something like that?**

CA: Yes. Oh yes. It was playing – I remember [long pause] you got – we had these flying bombs that came over. And they came over and they didn't even bother to sound the fire alarm. But you could hear them coming and you didn't bother as long as you could hear them. But when they stopped you knew that they were going to land. And so you were sort of waiting for them to get past and they were going to go somewhere else. And we – they didn't sound the aircraft alarm. If you were on duty in the camp - you see our small camps were outside the main camp with all the administration buildings within the middle. And they used to - they didn't sound the fire alarm because it was all so complicated. But they would just say that there was the alert and you were supposed to get under your desk if you heard one of these coming, you got under your desk. If you were afraid and if you weren't afraid you still got under your desk if it stopped making noise. Cause you knew it was going to land somewhere near. And there was a chap who used to sing with the band and if you were off duty you came out of your hut and there was [slit trenches] which they said there was - not very many - there was flying glass - there was always flying glass, a lot of

people got those flying and I say the WACs got purple hearts and they all got purple hearts from flying glass. But we didn't get them until the [eight]] years. Not that we tried to get them. It was [pause] but there was a chap who sang and I can remember that whenever you heard one of these bombs and it cut out, this chap used to sing. And he used to sing [long pause] "Something have you anything to say to me?" Skylark. "Have you anything to say to - can you tell me where my love can] be?" And he - we would wait to see if he was off duty but he - it was not a thing that frightened anybody because you could - you just have to get into a slit trench. And the most thing you would get was flying glass or something. I don't think anybody was ever killed there.

**[1:01:56] JZ: Were you stationed at Bushy Park when the war was over? On VE day.**

CA: I was in Germany. France, in Germany. We were only the holding platoon in Bushy Park waiting to go over to France. It wasn't serving any purpose. It was just getting bigger and bigger with units coming down from further up north and coming in. And -

**[01:02:22] JZ: And do you remember VE Day? Do you remember the war's conclusion?**

CA: Yes. I remember [pause] the thing was that you get used to the sound of aircraft going over in a camp like Bushy Park. And I remember getting up and going to the ablutions and thinking - can't hear any aircraft. And there was no sound at all. Because they were all gone. And then we put on the radio and found that the - but we heard on the radio that they'd - and then we realised that the camp was empty more or less of men. They'd all gone.

DB: So there was no warning before D Day. You didn't know it was about to happen?

CA: Oh yes we knew it was about to happen.

DB: But you didn't know the day it was going to happen?

CA: - you'd go week after week. When we came down there we were saying we hope we get down there before the balloon goes up. But we went on and we went on and we went on and then all of a sudden it had happened and of course the camp was empty. And everybody was creeping about. And we had the Sergeant called Sergeant Blue and he was extremely nice. And he had twin brothers. Twins. They were younger than him and they'd both been - because they had like a - the Americans were called up on this by - you picked up a number I think. I got the feeling they were - anyway they were - he was very depressed because he'd heard that they'd been called up. And he didn't want them to have anything to do with the army. And [pause] they were actually in England. I remember that he was very depressed because he'd heard they'd come to England but he couldn't go and see them. And they were both killed. Round about D Day, they were in the first troops to go over. And I've got a photograph of him actually. Now where did Bob say he'd gone? Because I've got photographs of the [pause] now where would he have put them?

DB: They're not in this album here?

**[01:04:53] JZ: Not these ones here no?**

CA: Oh. Maybe he has. Yes there we are.

**[01:05:03] JZ: So just for the tape I'll just say that we're looking at a photo album.**

CA: That is Bushy Park. That is the one who wanted gloves for his wife.

**[01:05:14] JZ: So that's the - this chap here you say? He's the one that wanted leather gloves for his wife, right.**

CA: Yes.

**JZ: So we're looking at a picture of five people stood out in a park. Two ladies and three men. Yes so that's Bushy Park there. Amazing.**

CA: Now that's not Bushy Park. This is a chap from one of the colonies. And that's me and one of my friends who - funnily enough I met a girl who was born the same day as me. She was called Jenny. And that's - we just sort of adopted him. He was black as the ace of spades.

**[01:06:00] JZ: And then this is you here?**

CA: That's me.

**JZ: How old would you have been in that picture, do you know?**

CA: [Long pause] I probably was about 21. 22. Well I was born in 1921. And that would have been 1940s. [inaudible] only 19? And that is the other side of Bushy Park. There was this cafe and we used to go there. And that is Baby. He was - he went to - he was all dressed up. And he came to say goodbye. He was going to go to Buckingham Palace and ask Princess Elizabeth to marry him. And he said should he go through the backdoor? [Laughter] I don't know what happened to him. He was a cowboy.

**[01:07:11] JZ: When the war was over was there great celebrations?**

DB: You were in Paris weren't you?

CA: Sorry?

DB: When the war ended you were in Paris.

CA: I was in Paris yes. Well nothing happened. It's just the fighting stopped really. But I was in Paris. And the French were going mad. And we couldn't - we were at Versailles and you could get a tube train in quite quickly. And we came in and then we got hold onto a lorry. There were French people and they [inaudible] les Anglais, there weren't very many - the people who liberated were American troops, they weren't British troops. And so I was called up onto this lorry. And the funny thing was there was this big NAAFI and it was at the bottom of the Champs-Élysées. And as we went past the bottom I saw a British tommy come out carrying a teapot. [Laughs] He was obviously working in one of the offices and they sent him over there to get teapot for the tea. Paris was going mad and he was picking his way across [inaudible] to get this teapot. That was [inaudible]. I'm glad I found those. That's the ATS, that was before we went.

**[1:08:43] JZ: That's the full - would you call it a unit?**

CA: That's the ATS. And I think there was one Wren. I think she was some naval officer's secretary and he insisted on her going. That was at Bushy Park. That was when I first joined up in the ATS. That's the couple I was billeted with in York. That's my father. And he had been sent - they'd cleared Portsmouth and he had been sent to the [pause] somewhere in London. Because Uncle Reg told me that he had gone to sea and they moved the troops, the navy. That's Ginge. This is Jenny who was born the same day as me. That's the band that -

**[1:09:44] JZ: So we've got a group of six men. That's the band that played on the base?**

CA: Sorry?

**JZ: That's the band that played at the Bushy Park base? Is that right?**

CA: No. Wait a minute. This is when I was in Germany. And then we got some parachutes. And they died them. And we did a sort of a - we had like a dance team. I mean that one there. And that is at - outside Brussels. That's when we were in the Monty Club. Of course I'm looking for the ones. [Inaudible]. No those are all earlier ones. I have them - the other ones are of the [long pause] I wonder where Bob could have put them.

[Break]

**[1:11:05] JZ: So after the war finished, what did you do then? Did you go back up north? Did you stay?**

CA: Well I wasn't demobbed until - you had the demob group. And that went on when you joined up really. And you had - everybody had to serve so long. And I came and my father had been called - that's my father, he was retired from the navy but he was interviewed during the war and told that he would be called back because he was an instructor. So he went - the day before - the day war broke out and he was the last of us to retire. No they are the old ones. It was strange the way things worked out really. But I [long pause]

**[1:12:19] JZ: One thing I forgot to ask is that on the Bushy Park base there's stories of people like Glenn Miller coming and playing to the troops. Do you remember that?**

CA: Yes. There was a big - whether it was a PX or a NAAFI, in the centre of the camp. And everybody came. And [long pause] yes, had loads of stars there. They all came and they had a band that was there permanently, there was dancing every night. We only went - the British only - they would [inaudible] on the British night they would play a lot of things that the British - with different dances and things really.

**[1:13:06] JZ: So there was different music for different -**

CA: Well they could play anything. It was the same band - they were a really good band. Can you remember any of the songs of the war? They were funny sort of songs. I was talking to somebody and she said [long pause] There was one called Mairzy Doats and dozy doats and liddle lamzy divey. It was - they were just starting what we call jitterbugging. Jiving. It was starting. And you used to get in Covent Garden - they would suddenly the dancing would sort of [inaudible] and some - there were maybe some negroes there and they would be doing jive. And we would just stop dancing and watch because they were quite incredible. And you could have civilians or some - if you were in the services you could take a civilian girlfriend in. And they were sort of standing watching this and all the rest - but for the main it was just - you had to be in uniform. It was -

**[1:14:25] JZ: Did you enjoy dancing yourself?**

CA: Oh yes. Still do. Well I mean it's [long pause] well I'm getting sort of very stiff now and all the rest of it. But it's - yeah, I still - in those days a town like Chesham - the town hall would always have a dance on the one night. But there isn't now. Everything comes through the - it all has to go through the radio doesn't it or whatever it is. You lose a lot of the local things. It's - I don't. I'm just trying to think - it's a pity I can't show you the ones. Because there were photographs. Everybody was photographed before going over to France. So I've got quite a lot of photographs actually.

DB: Well maybe Bob could have a look later and then scan them and email them.

**JZ: For sure, he said he could do that.**

CA: Yes.



DB: I was just going to say, I don't know what your timeframe is. I'm a bit pressed.

**[1:16:03] JZ: That's fine I was going to wrap up fairly soon anyway. I was just going to turn to you very quickly if that's alright. Just to talk about your research around the GI brides. What did you discover when you went about this book?**

DB: Well the funny thing is with the book that I worked on - basically I wrote a series of books with my parents, Nula, and the reason we got into writing about GI brides was that her grandmother married a GI. And had - she had sort of - well she had a very difficult marriage. Which some of them did. Not by all means all of them but a sizeable minority found that things in America weren't quite what they were all cracked up to be. So in her case she'd sort of come back and remarried and tried to sort of put that behind her. But it was something that Nula had always been kind of interested in finding a bit more about. So after her grandfather died, the second husband, she spoke to her grandmother about it. And she sort of heard this quite fascinating story. And it was really just sort of looking into that that we discovered that there were actually - it wasn't by any means a unique experience. There were 70,000 British women who married Americans. So it was quite a sizeable group of people. The biggest migration of women in American history. And not just from Britain, they came from around the world. The British ones were probably the biggest contingent. And we were just - we were looking for a topic a book, we write these books, we were looking for a topic for the next one. We thought this is a really fascinating story and it kind of shines a light on an interesting period of history - on maybe an element of second world war history that people don't necessarily far beneath the surface with. We've got this idea of the brass GIs, they're kind of around. But looking at the consequences of that and the way that changed people's lives. Going on for the rest of their lives really.

**[1:18:04] JZ: I understand there were entire boats of women that crossed the Atlantic, is that right?**

DB: Oh yeah. The big kind of luxury liners, the Queen Mary and so on, would be packed with GI brides. And the boats - they were looked after fairly well on the boats because the Red Cross did a lot for the women. And they'd have people on board the boats [interruption; resumes 1:19:37] - yeah they did, they travelled on huge boats. Luxury liners basically. The Queen Mary was one of the most sort of popular ones. But one thing funnily enough - I interviewed a woman who said she'd been told she was going to travel on the Queen Mary and it had this reputation for luxury and excitement so she was quite thrilled. And also it said on her ticket she had a place in a first class cabin. And it was only when she got on board that she realised that these liners, they'd had everything stripped out. They'd been painted, they were grey. And the first class cabin - she was in a first class cabin but she was sharing it with six other women and three of them had small children with them. So it was cramped. They were really cramming them in. But they were looked after very well on those boats because they had the Red Cross on board, they had a whole sort of repertoire of activities. They'd have dances every night, they'd have music. They'd have painting, card games, they'd have a library. And they also would have these kind of classes because these were British women who were going to have to go to live in America and adjust to life in America. So the Red Cross would put classes on in American customs, how to go to the supermarket. These kind of things that maybe weren't familiar to British women at the time.

**[1:20:51] JZ: And I gather there were some examples of women stateside and the man not being there to greet them.**

DB: Yeah. That did happen a few times. In fact one account that was quite interesting that I read in - the Red Cross have a big archive in Maryland I think - in America anyway. I went there while we were over there interviewing people and went through a lot of their old case reports because they would write up their accounts of the people that they'd been dealing with. One of them was this amazing story about this woman who - she travelled all the way on the boat - her husband hadn't turned up - basically didn't want to know her. And so the Red Cross, we're really sorry, we'll put you on the next boat. And she said before you do that, there's a guy in California who actually proposed to me before this one. Would you mind just

sending a message over to him? So the Red Cross office - they sent a telegram to their office in California, they said can you track down this guy. And basically this woman's in New York and she's wondering if the offer still stands. And so she waited for a few days and the message came back saying yeah yeah, he'd love to have you so they put her on a train to California.

**[1:22:02] JZ: Amazing, amazing. And would they typically have got married in the UK in wartime and then reunited on the other side?**

DB: Usually, usually. I mean there were a few - we did interview one woman, she was engaged. Her husband won some money in a card game and flew her over and then they got married in the States. But yeah typically they would be married already. And in some cases they would have kids already. Because there was a big - basically when the war came to an end there was a big effort to get all the Americans back home. But for a long time no one was really doing anything about these women and there were these 70,000 women who had married these guys, some of them had kids now, their husbands had basically disappeared. And they were having a lot of trouble getting the American government to deal with it and that's why in the end they passed this act called the War Brides Act. Which basically gave them a special immigration status so there were no quotas applied to them so they could all move to America which otherwise would have been tricky. And also provided free transport to get them there. But to get to that point, they had protests, they would have - they were besieging Eleanor Roosevelt hotel when she was staying in London, they besieged her - the outside of the hotel she was staying in, waving these placards, saying we want our ships, we want our ships. So there was a real campaign basically saying don't forget about their women, your men have married them and they're your responsibility, you've got to look after them.

**[1:23:36] JZ: And just finally, you mentioned it wasn't all it was cracked up to be in some of the instances. My understanding is that people would end up in some Midwestern backwater when they were expecting to be living in New York City or something along those lines. Is that the case?**

DB: That is - yeah that is definitely the cliched version of it. It did turn out to be true for a lot of people. The thing is a lot of people that we spoke to - when the Americans arrived they had this great sense of glamour. They had a lot of money. They got paid five times as much as the British tommies at the same rank sometimes. And also they could kind of - they were doing something important with their lives, they were in the army, they were going to win the war, they were going to save western civilization and so on. So they were imbued with this kind of real aura of being important people somehow. They could reinvent themselves. They could leave behind whoever they were in their tiny little town in their - wherever. And so - for the English girls as well many of them had never met an American before. Americans to them were people they saw at the cinema basically living the high life in New York or whatever. So there was definitely that kind of expectation that they were kind of moving to this fantasy land in some ways. And in fact it turned out very different. My partner Nula's grandmother, she married a guy from Georgia, he seemed like a very charming southern gent. She thought she was going to *Gone With the Wind* - in fact she turned out to be going to a cotton plantation family, they were struggling financially. They were kind of making do but it was a tough life. It was a very difficult experience. Also they - a lot of the women, they got a lot of hostile treatment from some of the Americans who felt they'd stolen their men basically. They arrived in New York to placards being waved in their faces saying English whores, go home. So there was really an element of kind of hostility against them in the same way as there had been over here. There had been hostility against them for running off with the Americans. So they definitely had a tough time of it. But - some of them it didn't work of them. I mean some of them their husbands had frankly lied to them about their situation. Famously one man apparently claimed - when the woman has asked him what his job, he sort of said vaguely oh I'm in oil. And it turned out that he basically worked at petrol station. [Laughter]. So there was a degree of picking up - trying to put on a good show for the women and inevitability at some point that was going to fall apart. But having said that - so those were the eye catching stories and the British press, the tabloid press here had a field day with these kind of stories but they were very condemning of these women for betraying their country and running off with the Americans in the first place. But actually the

majority of them, they did stick it out - their divorce rate was actually lower than the normal civilian rate. Which is surprising in some ways given there were all these cross-cultural issues to be negotiated and so on. I interviewed about 50 or 60 so GI brides - the vast majority of them had happy marriages, happy lives in America. Worked out well for them. But certainly it's true there were a few, a decent minority who found it was a lot tougher than they were expecting really. It wasn't what they imagined it was going to be.