

Female breaks tradition to serve in Army, World War II turns boy into man finds her passage out of Ponca City, Okla.

By Caitlin Dyck
Staff reporter

"Nurses, housewives, secretaries, stay at home mothers." These are all general terms used to describe women in the 1940s. For Leora (Lee) Shingleton-Stewart, that could not be further from what she was as a young adult during that time period. "I chose to live and do things a little differently," said Stewart.

She was a three-stripe sergeant in the army based in Fort Myer, Va., from February 1943 to December 1946. "I took my basic training at Fort Oglethorpe, Tenn. and was then transferred to Fort Myer following that for the remainder of my time serving in the Army," said Stewart.

Before joining the Army, Stewart did factory work under contract with the Army, putting together gear and equipment for what would soon be her fellow soldiers. "I thought I would never get out of Ponca. My mother didn't want me to go in to the service, but it was something I chose to do for myself," said Stewart.

She grew up in Ponca City, Okla. and married at the young age of 16. Shortly after her marriage, she gave birth to daughter, Jenne Marie. Stewart asked her parents to take full custody of her daughter so she could join the service and travel around the country.

"My daughter was so proud of me when I came back, seeing me in my uniform. She just smiled and asked me to come to school with her so she could show me off," said Stewart. Stewart also has three grandchildren and several great grandchildren and even great-great grandchildren.

Touring around Washington D.C. and going to Georgetown on the weekend, Stewart managed to find time to enjoy the sites while serving. "I got my picture taken next to the different monuments and some friends. I would go to Georgetown and have a beer or two, but I would never finish them, I didn't enjoy the taste of beer



Aly Sparkman/Special to the Collegian
Leora (Lee) Shingleton-Stewart began by working in a factory that made equipment for soldiers. Later, she defied the traditional thoughts on women's work and chose to join the Army.

much," said Stewart.

Many medals and recognitions are given to those who serve and lose their lives in the armed forces. Stewart received the good conduct medal during her years in the Army. "Oh, I got the good conduct medal, but everyone gets the good conduct medal," said Stewart.

"I have had the chance to go back and visit the places I went to and the ones I was stationed at, although I am getting older, being 91, so I have chosen not to put the burden on others to watch over me," said Stewart.

Many different ceremonies take place in remembrance and celebration of the Veterans who served in the Armed Forces throughout our nation's history. Stewart said, "This day is pretty much like any other to me, although I go to the ceremonies, which I am very impressed by. Some just are more impacted by

it then I am. I think those that put the ceremonies on do a pretty great job, and I'm glad I get to be a part of it."

Like many who live at the Kansas Veterans Home, Stewart was put on a waiting list to be accepted and allowed to move in. "One day I realized I was getting older and thought it would be a good idea to see if I could move in here. I called them and they said it would be up to a six month wait. They called me back in a month and a half," said Stewart.

"I've lived here since August of 2009 and I love it. The people here are very friendly and always have stories to tell. Like anyplace you move, it's not 'home', but I do enjoy it," said Stewart.

Caitlin Dyck is a senior majoring in general communication. You may e-mail her at caitlin.dyck@sckans.edu.

By Amber Hart
Staff reporter

Thomas Junkins Jr. served in the Navy during World War II for a year and a half as a third class electrician.

"In 1945, when you turn 18 years old, you got your draft papers," said Junkins. "So I enlisted in the Navy. With that came an opportunity to get radio training and other stuff like that."

Junkins enlisted in the Navy in 1945 and was out in late 1946. Approximately 40 others from Junkins' high school in El Dorado enlisted at the same time.

Before Junkins enlisted and left for training he was in high school, doing what any other teenage boy would do.

"I believe that the armed forces can impact someone's life many ways," said Junkins. "For us high school boys, it turned us into men. It taught me how to be on my own. It's an experience that I'll never forget."

Junkins was stationed in the Philippines, Okinawa, and Shanghai, China.

"I have had chances to go visit these places but I couldn't afford it and I was busy raising my kids," said Junkins.

He had an opportunity to visit the WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C. but his health prevented this.

The most memorable moment that Junkins had was in 1945 in Okinawa when a typhoon hit

while they were still in the water in a submarine chaser, a small, fast, naval vessel intended for anti-submarine warfare.

"The waves were over three stories high and the rain was so hard and heavy that you couldn't see four feet in front of you. When the waves crashed over the sub chaser that we were in, I was holding onto the anchor chain so hard that when the storm was over you could see my finger prints on the chain from where I was holding it," said Junkins.

When Junkins enlisted, his parents were worried, but when he got back they were happy and glad to see him and that he was okay. He told them about the fun stuff that he had done.

Junkins and his friends had fun in Shanghai, China. They found a YMCA where they could go dancing. They went sightseeing. "We saw a lot of bars and we did what any other 17-18 year-old would do," said Junkins. "Also, the Philippines were peaceful and calm."

When Junkins and his friends got back to shore they went their separate ways and still kept in touch. "I used to keep in touch with the others that I served with, but then we lost track of each other and we also got older and grew apart," said Junkins.

After Junkins was discharged from the Navy, he got married Sept. 12, 1947. He was married 43 years until his wife died from

breast cancer. They had three daughters, six grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren.

"Veterans Day means a lot. I have celebrated it in many different ways; with a bean feed, marched in parades, and set up flags. It is a big holiday for all of us. We need to honor our Veterans, living and dead," said Junkins. "The only thing that I wish is that more people would get involved. Everything has diminished because of the lack of help, but there has been a lot of support especially because of the Veterans home and the cemetery."

Junkins moved into the Veterans Home July 18, 2011.

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Special to the Collegian
Thomas Junkins Jr. served as an electrician in the Navy for a year and a half.

Veterans Day Tribute

Veteran's Day is Nov. 11, the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended World War I. World War I was formally ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 with the German signing of the Armistice.

U.S. President Woodrow Wilson was the first president to proclaim an Armistice Day for Nov. 11, 1919.

President Dwight Eisenhower signed it into law May 26, 1954. Congress amended this act on June 1, 1954, replacing "Armistice" with "Veterans," and is has been known as Veterans Day since.

The Veterans tribute section was cre-

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Finally, the Collegian staff would like to thank the veterans who allowed us to share their stories.



Patrick Taylor/Special to the Collegian
Raymond Pitts served from 1941-1944 in the Naval Reserves. After his service, he attended Cornell University and then Kansas University to obtain his master's.

By Austen Holloway
Staff reporter

Raymond Pitts has seen the world's major changes through the last century.

Pitts was a sailor in the Unit-

ed States Navy and through the military branch, saw the U.S. and many locations across the vast and diverse globe.

Pitts is from Waverly, a small community approximately 40 miles south of Topeka where he

Kansan goes from shelf stocking to sea travel

grew up in a humble environment. He said one of the greatest influences in his life was his grandfather, who owned a local grocery store in Topeka. His grandfather put him to work during his youthful years, keeping him busy in the family owned business.

Pitts volunteered for service from 1941-1944 in the Naval Reserves. In his years of service, he reached the rank of junior officer. World War II was happening during his tour.

One of his greatest memories was of his friend, John T. Hayward, the man who dropped the bomb on Nagasaki in Japan to end the war. Pitts explained how proud he was to be able to serve with such great men, to see such great accomplishments in his-
tory.

His brother was the only survivor on the U.S.S. Omaha when it got hit, said Pitts. Being the only survivor, his brother was promoted from petty officer to lieutenant because of the situation and the major loss of men on the ship during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Pitts said the biggest thing he took away from his time in the service was learning how to get along with everyone from different types of backgrounds and races. He said, "One thing that bothered me was the fact they wouldn't allow soldiers of color to carry a firearm. I don't think that was right at all."

Pitts had seen how his grandfather could be friends with a black man, so in turn he said, "I didn't see what was so wrong with it. My grandfather was

friends with Dan Madden, and Dan owned the black grocery store in Garden Parks, the black side of town."

Pitts also explained around the time he was in high school, he witnessed ethnic inequality. They forced the blacks from the Garden Parks district and told them they'd have to find new homes and basically start over.

Pitt's life didn't revolve around the military. In his experience, once they got out of the military, everyone around him either used the skills they took from the military to find a job or they did what he did and then went to college.

"Cornell in Iowa, that's where I went. Then after I finished up there I went to Kansas University to get my master's degree."

Pitts said he'd lived a full

life. He was married four times and had one son. He said he's outlived all his wives. That was that. He left it there. He said he'd seen all the places he needed to see and done all the things he needed to do.

What does Veterans Day mean to him? He said, "I don't know what it means to me. But I think they should fly our flag at the V.A. at its highest point 24/7. That would make me happy!"

Pitt's life story is one to be honored. Pitts has accomplished a lot in his time and has known important people.

He has made his mark on society as a veteran of our country's military.

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Airman leaves shoe factory, caring mother behind to care for military patients

By Spencer Pullen
Staff reporter

Some people join the military because they want to serve their country. Others join as a way out of their environment. Some may join because there is no other route for them to choose. For veteran Bob Lewis it was to get away from his mother.

Lewis was the youngest of four boys. His mother was a bit possessive, wanting to keep her youngest child at home.

"The service helped free me from my mother. She would have never let me leave if it was not for the service," said Lewis.

While working at a shoe factory, Lewis determined that he

was going to join the Military International Guard, technically the Air Force. He initially was going to enlist for four years of service. He was late the morning he enlisted. Eventually Lewis enlisted and ended up serving for 17 months and 20 days, which he calls lucky.

The transition from high school to military life was a big adjustment for Lewis. He was away from home and was under strict supervision.

First Lewis was stationed in Austin, Texas, and then was transferred to the old World War II barracks in Victorville, Calif. by the Mojave Desert. "It wasn't unusual to wake up with sand in your blanket," said Lewis.

On weekends Lewis went with a couple of his buddies from the Nevada National Guard back to Reno, Nev. to gamble and enjoy that scenery since it was new to him.

When Lewis joined the service, he did not have any intentions to shoot at people or get shot at. He was stationed in the medical unit on his post. When he was not doing that, he was a clerk typist and maintained the personnel records of the enlisted people in a noncombat zone. Lewis finished as a Buck Sergeant in the Air Force.

After Lewis was discharged in 1951, he went to night school to become a court reporter. In the meantime he went back to work

in the shoe factory and became head office manager of a shoe factory plant in Topeka.

On July 18, 1954 he and his wife Joy got married and have been together for almost 60 years. Eventually he quit and became a court reporter in Columbus.

Subsequently, the shoe factory went out of business. In 1968 Lewis and his wife moved to Winfield. Three years ago Lewis suffered a stroke and he was placed in the Veterans home and his wife still visits him.

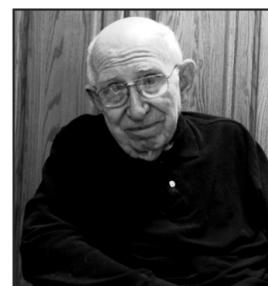
Due to the limited service Lewis had, he does not consider himself a veteran. "I think Veterans Day should be celebrated, but I think you should be quali-

fied to celebrate it and I don't think I'm qualified," said Lewis. He could not even fathom the thought of being shot at.

He has known people personally who were and are veterans who have been in combat. Lewis looked at the military more as an easy way out of his life back home. He said he has a guilty conscience even being in the Veterans Home in which he never envisioned himself.

Lewis will be turning 80 shortly. He and his wife had two sons, five grandchildren and a great granddaughter.

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Leslie Bowdich

Special to the Collegian
Bob Lewis served as a medic and clerk typist during his 17 months and 20 days with the military. After that time, he went to night school and became a court reporter in Columbus, Mo.