

Interview with Alice Tash

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Interviewed by Deborah Miles

Alice Tash grew up in Brooklyn and later moved with her family to St. Petersburg, FL. When the war started she had returned to New York to attend Cooper-Union College. She first learned about the bombing of Pearl Harbor as she was returning from church and her uncle informed her. She recalls that she did not understand the significance of that at the time. She wanted to go into the WAVES but her father tore up the applications.

She soon married a fellow Cooper Union student and he was sent to the South Pacific. On the day he left she suffered a miscarriage. She worked in a booth at Penn Station and saw lots of the comings and goings of soldiers along with lots of famous people such as Joe DiMaggio. Many of the soldiers would flirt with her and say "this is my last night". If she returned the request in any kind of reciprocatory way her supervisor would give her a whack on her rear end to "keep her in line". She remarked how different the world is now for women in the work force – how better the position of women is.

As the war drew to a close she recalls many of the returning soldiers from England who were accompanied by their War Brides. In particular, she remembered African American Soldiers and their English Brides and newborn babies. She has often wondered how they fared in the intensely racist and segregated south.

During the war her husband was on the USS Franklin, which was hit by a kamikaze plane and sunk. He was in the water for eight hours before he was rescued and taken to a hospital in Hawaii. He had accumulated enough points to come home. In the beginning, they were only grateful to be safe and together again. While she was upset that he did not want to finish college on the GI Bill she was glad to use the GI loans to buy a home. Over time they began to see how the war had changed each of them. The marriage was difficult. She decided to go to work and her husband's reply was "What can you do?"

She saw an ad for a weight loss business called "Slenderella". At the business lunch for the job the owner asked "how will your husband feel about you making more money than him?" She wasn't sure how he would feel but it was delightful for her to receive such a high salary and felt very happy to have a great job and a wonderful place to work.