

My First KP

By Verna V. Oxford #1921

The dreaded day had arrived, my first KP!

The dark, dreary morning in northern Georgia did little to elevate my morale at 5:00 a.m. as I clomped, heavy-footed, down the catwalk toward the mess hall in my “Lil’ Abners.”

I fretted over the possibility of receiving a gig for a poorly made bed. To have accomplished that would have included planting my foot squarely in sleeping Juliette’s face. That might have awakened the entire platoon.

We were advised to eat breakfast now. The pancakes were hot and good despite the adverse noise about poor army chow.

I worked on the pots and pans group that morning. It appeared easy enough, but I hadn’t counted on such an inept partner. When she let go of her side of a heavy solid grill top before I did, the unexpected weight pinned my fingers to the sink, doing a real number on several of them.

Morning chores done, we progressed into assisting with chores for lunch for 150 ravenous souls who would swarm in after a morning of classes and marching practice. Not being a coffee drinker, then or now, I was pleased to note that lemonade would be served at lunch.

Violating the unwritten rule of not volunteering for anything, I asked one of the cooks if I could add ice, my memory still fresh of lukewarm lemonade from a few days before.

The cook gave permission.

At the sliding-top ice cooler, I chipped away. As I worked, I sagged a bit against the wall. My shoulder dislodged a fire extinguisher from its secured position and it slid to the cement floor with a loud crash.

The small hose with a nozzle was no longer in its proper position at the top. The immediate discharge of the contents under pressure caused the hose to oscillate like a venomous viper. The nearby cooks, from their thighs on down, were covered with foam!

Everyone had to help clean up this mess, and my name must have been mud. I wonder if one of them is now writing about the clumsy fool who knocked a fire extinguisher from the wall, creating havoc?

Now I was on the dining room crew. Tables were scrubbed and condiment containers cleaned and filled.

Now for mopping the floor. Pails with squeezers on the side were new to all of us. We managed to get most of the water off the floor and pails put away. We were advised an additional company was moving into the area, and there would be 300 for supper.

We were still alive at 9:00 p.m. when we were released. It was dark and cold again as we slowly forced ourselves along the catwalks to our various barracks. I climbed up the end of the bunk, slid in and was asleep before lights out.

With the resilience of youth, the world looked brighter in the morning. So did I.

Some claim that each WAC relieved a man for more important work. I've never seen any confirmation of this. We did work hard and did our best to be helpful in the overall war effort. I met many fine people, both women and men. I am proud to have served in the Women's Army Corps during WWII.