

# A Jewish girl who served her country

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Dorothy Flesham

## A Jewish girl who served her country

*By Merle A. Branner (06/22/2007)*

In going through boxes in the basement of North Shore Congregation Israel, we came across one that was labeled 'World War II Soldiers.' In it were letters that soldiers had written to the congregation's rabbis and copies of letters that the rabbis had written to the soldiers.

One of the letters, however, was different from all the others. That's because the soldier's name was Dorothy.

Dorothy R. Flesham. She was the daughter of Alfred and Jeanette Flesham who were members of the congregation in the 1920s. She enlisted in the Women's

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Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1943.

The letters and papers that were found were very exciting. When they were shown to one of our volunteers, Louise Cohen, she noticed that one of the letters was from a woman, and it was one of her old classmates. Louise is still good friends with Dorothy. By coincidence, she had a phone message that very same day on her answering machine from Dorothy.

Louise returned Dorothy's call. She told her all about her day in the archives. Dorothy was very excited to learn that she was going to receive a letter with her confirmation speech from 1933 and other documents that related to the time she was in the service.

Dorothy was 25 years old when she and her cousin decided to join the WAACs. When asked what her parents thought about her decision, she said that her mother was very supportive. That is because her mother, Jeanette, wanted to be a nurse when she was a young girl but was told by her mother that she was to be a housewife. And so Dorothy's mother told her daughter to "go ahead."

After reading the material that was sent to Dorothy, she really did not remember receiving a letter from Rabbi Hertz or writing him a letter. She thought it was very nice that the rabbi wrote to her. Dorothy looked at the copy of the letter she sent and commented about a soldier with personalized stationery.

The letter to Rabbi Hertz was dated May 26, 1943. Dorothy was finishing her six weeks of basic training at Fort Ogelthorpe, Georgia. She was then transferred to Officers Training School (Fort Demon) in

Des Moines, Iowa.

Her first assignment after Officers Training School was in Portland, Oregon. From there, she went to San Francisco and then Glendale, California. There she was assigned to be the Quartermaster Supply Officer for two years. After V.E. Day (Victory in Europe Day), she was transferred to Pueblo, Colorado. There she met her future husband Connell who was also transferred there. He was from Brooklyn.

They got married in 1948 and had two sons. When asked what her boys thought of their mom in the military, she said "they laugh." They were among the few children of their generation that had not just their father in World War II, but also their mother.

In addition to Dorothy, we've found three other North Shore Congregation Israel women who served their country during World War II: Alys L. (Eiseman) Moss (WAVE), Martha Anne Stein (WAVE), and Miriam Cohn (WAC).

*Merle Branner is archivist at North Shore Congregation Israel.*

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