

**Dorothy Mary Bilinski, nee Johnson  
Veteran**

**Michael Russert  
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Interviewers**

**Interviewed on June 5, 2003  
NYNG, HQ  
Latham, New York**

**Q:** Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?

**DB:** On my baptismal record it is Mary Dorothy Johnson but on my birth certificate it is Dorothy Mary Johnson. I married John Bilinski. My date of birth is 10-3-23.

**Q:** Where were you born?

**DB:** Green Bay, Wisconsin

**Q:** What was your educational background prior to being in the military service?

**DB:** I finished high school and entered the service primarily because I wanted to continue my education. My mother was a widow and couldn't afford it.

**Q:** Why did you select the navy?

**DB:** There was a sign outside of the post office one day when I was strolling by with my cousin and it said the navy needs you. We went in and asked them questions and then signed on the dotted line.

**Q:** Could you tell me where you were and what you heard about Pearl Harbor?

**DB:** Yes, I was in a small family restaurant in Green Bay where I was helping with waiting on tables, it was the Spanish view grill. Everyone there was devastated: we were shocked on believe.

**Q:** Now where did you go for your training?

**DB:** I went to Hunter College in the Bronx of New York.

**Q:** Have you ever been away from home prior to that?

**DB:** Yes, I worked in Chicago after I graduated from High School. But I stayed with some friends of my families so it wasn't like I was all by myself, on my own.

**Q:** When you went to the New York City area did that friend of yours go in the same direction?

**DB:** No, she went in another direction.

**Q:** Did you know anybody at all when you moved here?

**DB:** No, No, but I soon became aquatinted. As you can see I'm not afraid to speak up and out; it doesn't take me long and besides people in the Midwest are very friendly.

**Q:** What was some of your training what did you do?

**DB:** Well mostly when we first came in we were trained in the chain of command and things like that and drilling and prayed work we had a very nice drill instructor Ms. Blunt. When she would get perturbed by us she would say dear gussy, which was quite often.

**Q:** how long were you in Hunter College?

**DB:** I think it was 8 weeks. I think the hardest part was when we had to reach up and make our beds I was on the top bunk it really hurt our arms.

**Q:** Did you receive any specialized training?

**DB:** None at all.

**Q:** Where did you go after you left there?

**DB:** They sent me directly to camp Detrick, Frederick Maryland. Which is the German warfare center know known as fort Detrick I think. I was trained in a job there I had a rag of seaman first class I couldn't take any classes to be more than a seaman because I didn't go to any other schooling. So I was just trained in the job that I was trained in.

**Q:** What job was that?

**DB:** I worked in the Munitions division I was not involved in any harmful germs we had a grid area we had to go out in they had stakes in a circle and we had to know which way the wind was blowing and it had to be a nice day. They would detonate a bomb and we would put ampules on these stakes and there was a vacuum pump on the bottom. Then depending on which way the wind would blow we would have to put them in the direction in which the stuff from the bomb would come. After it was over we would go collect the ampules and bring them back to the lab. Put cotton in beakers with distilled water and let it sit awhile. Then we would have to pipet it out in Petri dishes with ager and put it in an incubator and see how those germs grew and that was my job.

**Q:** Did you have to wear any special type of clothing?

**DB:** we just had to wear smocks and masks and something on our heads and the white pants. We had a uniform a lab type uniform. It wasn't protective it was just to keep our clothes clean.

**Q:** Do you know what kind of germs they were working with at all?

**DB:** no I have no idea. But I know some of them had to be very bad because my husband was in a different section then I was and he was told when he was there and after he left to never give nay blood transfusions. So whatever he was

working with he could have possibly infected someone else, evidently. There were some people who did become ill there and they would just disappear and we had no idea where they were going. Another thing where the critters we worked with, I dint but people did. There were monkeys, mice rats and guanine pigs. I remember one time a monkey getting loose they didn't even try to catch I the poor critter they just destroyed him. It's just becoming known lately what was in the tests.

**Q:** You mentioned this article about a June hope Alice. Did you know her?

**DB:** I had met her but she was above me and she didn't work in my department. She went loopy and we didn't know what happened to her.

**Q:** So she was exposed to something?

**DB:** Yes, but I don't know what

**Q:** Then it says she was discharged with a disability?

**DB:** I have no idea whatever happened to her I only found out about this because of reading this article in the newspaper they told us nothing at the camp.

**Q:** So with someone like that they would just disappear?

**DB:** Yeah you're right they would just take them away, wherever.

**Q:** Now I have noticed that you said you have visited camp David

**DB:** Yeah.

**Q:** When did you go there?

**DB:** it was a weekend there were supposedly some important people coming to Camp David and they wanted someone to talk to and to play cards with and shoot pool with they had everything there. I was mostly amazed with the swimming pool because it had all colored lights underneath and it was beautiful. It was a beautiful place, but that whole place is beautiful.

**Q:** Now was the president there when you went there?

**DB:** No, but evidently there were some important people but I don't remember who they were know. It was so long ago.

**Q:** Now where you at camp Detrick for your entire time in the service?

**DB:** No, when japan surrendered a lot of us where let go but I was sent to Norfolk, Virginia for 15 days. Then from Norfolk I was reassigned to Bainbridge, Maryland. There I was running blood tests on sailors and mariners that were coming back from overseas.

**Q:** Then what were you doing with the blood, just examining it, where did they put it?

**DB:** Well, I didn't draw the blood but I had to do the centrifuge work and get it back.

**Q:** Now what were you looking for?

**DB:** I don't know. I guess some disease, you know if they had any communicable diseases or any sicknesses that could make them very ill or whatever. It was so that they could be discharged without any problems.

**Q:** Now where were you when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt?

**DB:** I was in Washington, DC at one of the Waves homes with my husband and some other people from Camp Detrick.

**Q:** Now where you married at the time?

**DB:** No, no, we were on an outing we went there to see a football game I think.

**Q:** what was your reaction from your group?

**DB:** Absolute shock, we just thought oh my heavens now what is going to happen. You know, we just thought what was going to happen to us. Cause we were young.

**Q:** What was your reaction when you heard about the atomic bombs being dropped on Japan?

**DB:** well, I didn't like it I don't like what's going on today but what control do I have, you just take it and you have to

**Q:** Did you think it was a good thing because it ended the war?

**DB:** I thought it was good in the fact that it ended the war. But I felt bad for all those people. I don't know but somehow it feels so wrong. I wish it had never been invented.

**Q:** Did you ever watch and USO shows why you were in the service?

**DB:** Yes, and I loved it going right on times square I think the USO. We would go there all the time for our coffee and donuts and socialize, it was very nice.

**Q:** Did you ever see any celebrities?

**DB:** Oh yes, let's see I saw, Curt Douglas, some of the girls I saw. Danny Thomas, Sammy Davis. I just can't remember any of the names of some of the other ones.

**Q:** When were you discharged?

**DB:** May 6, 1946.

**Q:** Where were you discharged?

**DB:** In Washington DC.

**Q:** Okay now you said you met the man that was going to become your husband in the service?

**DB:** Yes, at Camp Detrick. He was in the army and I was in a special section of the Navy that was stationed.

**Q:** What did he do at camp Detrick?

**DB:** He was in a different department than I was. All I know is whatever department he was in every time I walked by he would throw snowballs at me. And I don't know where he got them.

**Q:** Did you ever keep in contact with anyone that you served with?

**DB:** Yes, Marge Batile she is now Woodruff she now lives in Florida. She was my bunk mate at Camp Detrick she just called me from Florida last weekend. I used to keep in touch with one other girl who lived in Peekskill because I was from Wisconsin and we would work at Camp Detrick and we would work 10 days and have three days off. Naturally I couldn't go all the way to Wisconsin so we would go to her family's house in Peekskill and her name was Mary Gillberg. I kept in touch with her up to two Christmases ago and she just hasn't responded to me and I haven't been able to contact her husband and children. We would visit each other. The last time I have heard from her was when they were on their way to Cape Cod and they wanted me to join them. But my husband had a stroke and was under my care so I was not able to go.

**Q:** Now you said that one of the reasons you joined was for education did you ever use a GI bill?

**DB:** Never, no I got married and I used to go to the Bilinski factory and hang around and do whatever I could do there I never did continue my education, sorry to say.

**Q:** Did you ever join a veteran's organization after service?

**DB:** No, I didn't.

**Q:** Okay, you had some photographs to show us if you could hold them up and tell them about us?

**DB:** It was taken in 1946 it was my engagement picture. These were some of my friends I met in Maryland this was taken outside the lab in Bainbridge Maryland (second picture). I was home on leave and this is my uncle buss (third picture).

**Q:** Where was that taken?

**DB:** In Green Bay Wisconsin. This was Joe Dunham best man at my wedding and this was taken in Green Bay Wisconsin (fourth photo). This is my mom and step father this was taken at the same time when I was on leave in Wisconsin (fifth photo). These are relatives taken in Green Bay when I was home on leave (sixth photo). Well these are my discharge papers and what certified I was in the Navy. This is my husband and myself in our engagement picture.

**Q:** Was your husband in the Army?

**DB:** Yes, he was.

**Q:** His name was John Bilinski and he is from this area correct?

**DB:** Yes, yes he was born just up the street wade street.

**Q:** These are some photographs you sent us.

**DB:** This was taken with my cousin Val we were home on leave. This is the graduation picture from boot camp.

**Q:** Do you know where you are in this picture?

**DB:** when I finished boot camp?

**Q:** No, where about in the photograph?

**DB:** Oh yes, I am right here.

**Q:** How do you think your service changed or affected your life or do you think it didn't?

**DB:** Oh heavens yes, I wouldn't have been here if it hasn't been for the service. I would imagine I would be back in Green Bay but I don't know if I got out of high school I went to Chicago to work. I consider myself one of the first hippies. Myself and my buddy Mary Gillberg when we were very good friends we used to, there was no transportation no us station, no airplanes, no train station. So we used to go out on the highway and hitch hike. Sometimes we would go to the airfield that was run by the army and we would hitch hike on a plane. We just had an awful lot of nerve.

**Q:** Seems like you enjoyed yourself?

**DB:** Yes, I did I loved it because in my department there were only two women and there were over two hundred men and they spoiled us they made our duty very interesting and very light.