

**Rosemarie Conlon, nee Schneider
Veteran**

**Mike Russert
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Interviewers**

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Colonie New York**

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

RC: Rosemarie, it was, my maiden name was Schneider. I'm now Rosemarie Conlon. I was born May 26th, May 22nd, I'm nervous, 1925

Q: What was your educational background prior to entering military service?

RC: Prior to entering military service I graduated from high school with a business. Prior to the military I worked at the Maritime College for officers in New London Connecticut.

Q: Oh really, what did you do there?

RC: Secretary, and at the time I was only 17. My father had gone to New London, he was a plumber and there was no work here, and he went to work on submarines there. The family went with him and he finished his work there. I got a job with civil service, working at the Maritime College. When he finished he said "We're going home", and I was 17. The officer I was working for and his family offered for me to stay with them and my parents said "You go home". So I went home.

Q: Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

RC: I was in the car with my father and we heard it on the car radio, we were going to my aunt's house. It was just complete shock. Just, complete shock.

Q: You joined the army. Why did you select the army after working with the Navy?

RC: I worked with the, what I worked with was Maritime. It was not the navy. But, I don't know. I just wanted to join the army, to me that's what I wanted to do. I had no question where I wanted to go. I went to see about it and I had to be 20 years old to join. I had to wait until my 20th birthday, which was May 22nd 1945.

Q: Where did you go and where were you inducted?

RC: I was inducted and went to Des Moines for the basic training. Most of the women, when we finished basic training, we waited to see where we were going for additional training. Most of them were going for additional training but, I had enough I guess on the business courses. Some of them had changed completely. They would be doing business but they would send them to cook school or motor school but, I went right out to work at camp.

Q: How long was your basic training for?

RC: I'm trying to think...I can't. It wasn't that long. Whether it was 6 weeks or 8 weeks, that's what it was.

Q: Was it basically an introduction to military life, march, and salute?

RC: Yeah, marching and all basic, identifying aircrafts.

Q: Did you fire a rifle at all?

RC: No, no we didn't, no. That was a different world then. I don't believe the WACS were firing rifles at that point in time. We went by train to Camp Ritchie, we went, got close to there, and then we had to take a bus for the final trip to Camp Ritchie. When I called my parents after I got to Camp Ritchie to let them know where I was. They had already knew I was going, something like that, because they had checked up on me for security I had to get. The local sheriff came to the house and they had to check up whether I was a secure person or not because I had to have a clearance. This was directly under the military intelligence. It was called PAC MIRs, Pacific Military Intelligence Research. It was multinational, there were Canadian army and Canadian CWACS there. That was the Canadian WACS. Also there were English WACS there. They all worked together with these documents that they had managed to get, Japanese documents. Deciding which ones, they were limited on where they could actually go through and interpret so they had to decide which ones to interpret. I took the minutes and meeting that decided which ones to interpret and which ones not to.

Q: Now you said there were Japanese-American also?

RC: There were Japanese-American's, yes, and they helped with the interpreting. It was a very interesting unit to work with.

Q: Where did you live?

RC: We lived in barracks. The girls lived in barracks. We had our own cooks, we ate on our own. They decided we should go out early in the morning because we needed exercise, so before we were going to work in the morning they got us out to do exercises. There was quite a bit of complaints about that one because we were working a full time day and we had to get there earlier just so we could do these exercises. They decided we'd take on the afternoon and do some hiking rather than these exercises which we didn't think we needed to work in an office.

Q: How long of a day did you work?

RC: It was a good 8 hour day working and besides that we'd have KP, we'd have duties around, and we'd have to keep our barracks. We had inspections.

Q: So, They didn't let you forget you were in the army.

RC: No, they didn't let us forget we were in. We would have regular inspections there and everything else. We knew we were in the army.

Q: Were you allowed any liberty or time off?

RC: We had some time off. Not a lot but yes, we did have time off. We were there for quite a while and then we got moved into Washington D.C.. I was loaned out to another unit to work in the Pentagon for a while.

Q: What did you do there?

RC: I also did office work. I worked with the office work mostly. Everything I did was office work.

Q: Was the war still on at that point?

RC: The war in Germany was over and the war in... I think by then the war was pretty well down, over. It's hard to remember exactly but by the time we got to Washington it was the end of the war.

Q: Do you remember the reaction for VE Day?

RC: Yeah, we were in the USO and it was wild! It was a very happy time.

Q: Did you get to see any USO shows at all?

RC: Yeah, we had. Where we were in Camp Richie, we were, there was nothing around for entertainment at all, so the USO came. We had a USO pavilion there that we went to for dances and stuff because, there was nothing else there. It was out in the middle of nowhere.

Q: Did you see any celebrities?

RC: No, no I didn't. We had a very small unit, so it was very limited what we had.

Q: Do you recall the reaction when President Roosevelt died?

RC: Uh that was... not too much, no, no I don't.

Q: How about, with this being a unit that was connected to the Pacific, how about the dropping of the bombs in Japan, do you remember the reaction?

RC: Yeah, well that. When they heard that they figured, "Well that's the end". That was a really big, happy time. Of course, we were working with actual American-Japanese but you know, they weren't very happy when the bombs dropped on Japan. Like, that was pretty rough.

Q: What were the relations between the Japanese-Americans and the others working there?

RC: We were all working together. Some of the WACS went out with them. When we had parties everyone was there. It was very much, very liberal. There was such a mix. As I say there were English WACS and the Canadian WACS were paid very little. They had to pay them extra because they couldn't compete just to live with us even. So, it was very interesting. They had their offices there but we all lived together. The girls all lived together.

Q: Now, when you went to Washington what kind of facilities did you have to live in?

RC: We were in barracks. I think we were on Sparrocks on Sea St., a building that was just barracks. For a while we were in south, on... the fort down there. What is it? Fort Meyers... South... oh my mind is just not what it used to be. But yeah, we were there for a while and then we were at Sea St. and we were, I believe we were in an office building at 5th and K.

Q: What kind of work did you do there?

RC: Secretarial. I was secretarial, journal, all, it was all. The whole time I was there I worked in the same unit, PACMIRS and it was all intelligence. They were still going through documents that they had. Before that they had been going through government documents also. After war with Germany ended they were going through the Japanese just exclusively.

Q: When were you discharged?

RC: I got out... well the war was over and we had an opportunity, they gave us a choice. We could go to Japan, or we could go to Germany. I called my parents and my mother said, I said "You know my girlfriend and I really want to Germany". My mother said I let you go into the Army because of the war, the war is over, come home.

Q: Was this your first real time away from home?

RC: Yes, it was my first time away from my home and family. So I went home. So I got out then, that's when I got discharged.

Q: Did you ever make use of the GI bill?

RC: Just on my taxes. I got a break on my taxes, but no I never went back to school.

Q: Were you able to use the 50-20 club?

RC: When I went into the Army I had been working for the state, NY state. My job was waiting for me as soon as I came out. It was there and I went back to work.

Q: Did you stay in contact with anyone?

RC: For years I stayed in contact with my one girlfriend. She got out and worked for the same PACMIRS as the civilian and she worked there for years until she retired. We stood in touch for quite a while, Christmas cards, and when I got married she came up. After that we wrote and stood in touch but never really got to see each other really that much. We didn't travel that much at that point.

Q: Did you join or have you joined any veterans' organizations?

RC: The American Legion, but I haven't been active in it. I joined but that was it.

Q: Did your unit ever have any reunions?

RC: No, it was a very small unit and it was such... there were some from Canada, some from England and some from Australia. No we never did.

Q: How do you think your time in the service effected or changed your life?

RC: Oh it made me much more, I felt as if it opened me up a lot. I understood a lot of the things I didn't understand before I guess. It was just a big improvement in what I understood and was interested in.

Q: You have some photos you'd like to show us?

RC: Yes I do. I have a picture of the graduating class from basic training.

Q: Ok, now where about are you in that picture?

RC: I'm very hard to find at this point. You know, I can't see it right now.

Q: What year was that?

RC: It was 1945

Q: Where was that taken?

RC: That was in De Moyné. On the back I had a lot of the girls sign it. I have a picture of when I was in service, a little younger looking.

Q: Was that in 1945 also?

RC: This was in 1946. I also have a booklet on the unit I was in.

Q: Where are you from originally?

RC: When I went into service I was living in Delmar.

Q: And then when you were discharged?

RC: I went back to Delmar.

Q: Do you live in Beltrone now?

RC: I live in Beltrone now and I've lived in Colonie for since 1957.

Q: Your unit PACMIRS, does that stand for something?

RC: Yes, Pacific Military Intelligence Research Section

Q: Do you have more photos in those albums you'd like to show us?

RC: They're small pictures and not really all that great. Well here's one with the Japanese, a couple of the Japanese. The camp was around a beautiful lake. I wouldn't be surprised if it was being used now as a presidential camp.

Q: Who are those two ladies?

RC: This is me and one of my girlfriends.

Q: Is that the one you stayed in contact with?

RC: No, this is another one.

Q: Can we see some of your insignia?

RC: These are the ones I was done with because I ended up at T4

Q: Technical Corporal?

RC: Yes, well this is Technical Corporal but I ended up with Technical Sergeant. This shows one of the Chinese girls in this one.

Q: Oh you had some Chinese unit also? Were they Chinese-American?

RC: Yeah Chinese also, Chinese-American yes.

Q: Did you ever receive any Chinese documents?

RC: No, no we didn't do Chinese we did Japanese. In this one there is an English WAC, over there on this end. It was a very interesting unit.