

WOMEN IN MILITARY SERVICE FOR AMERICA
MEMORIAL DEDICATION
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Thursday; October 16 through Sunday, October 19, 1997

Before, including and after the above dates

As soon as information came concerning the WIMSA dedication, Mac and I definitely decided to attend. Reservation forms were mailed in during the summer months and hotel reservations were made through Bartelt Travel in Kalamazoo in July. At first we planned to go by bus, but changed to the Amtrak, and on October 13th, a good friend drove us, in the rain, to the Amtrak station in Dearborn. We "bussed" to the Toledo Amtrak station and connected with the Capitol Limited at 1 AM to Washington, via Cleveland and Pittsburgh. Our seats were in the coach; we sat, read, made our way to the dining car and lounged in the lounge car, viewing the pretty scenery in Pennsylvania. Around 2PM on Tuesday, Washington suburbs loomed into view and the train backed in to the beautiful Union Train Station. We paid the cab driver \$20.00 fare when we arrived at the Howard Johnson Hotel, Crystal City area in Arlington, VA; ~~our~~ our home for a week. The hotel was adequate, clean and their personnel helpful.

Mac immediately phoned her cousin, Jo Streit Stewart. She and her husband, Dana, came to the hotel in about 2 hours. That interval gave us ample time to unpack and shower. We had a nice visit and dinner at the hotel. It was fun to be with Jo again and to meet her husband. They left around 10:30 and as we walked into the crowded lobby, filled with a busload of nurses etc. veterans arriving from Kalamazoo, I saw someone I hadn't seen for some years--this kind and pleasant face belongs to Bob Hovis, my 2nd cousin (originally from California and now living with his wife Penny, in Centreville, VA, and working in Maryland (NIH). Bob had been patiently waiting in the hotel for 1½ hours. Bob, Mac and I crowded together on the end of a davenport and had a good hour visit--it was great! Bob presented me with a silver WIMSA medal, which I'll always treasure.

WEDNESDAY**

Mac and I hoped to tour the FBI Bldg on this free day and to get there, we had to go

via the Metro, a wonderful subway system. First, the courtesy hotel van drove us to the entrance, and underground we went. WITH HELP we learned how to ride the metro and to pay. --our fare. It took us 13 minutes to get to the exit nearest the FBI Building. We noticed one huge line and we were in another, only to be told there would be no more tours--"too early"--come back at 12:30, which we did--again they denied us admission--"too late"! We were disappointed. So--our next plan was to tour the Bureau of Engraving, so we walked and walked until we found the Bldg, where we joined the tour there----it was fascinating to go through "The Money Factory", noticing the processes of engraving, printing, plate making, examining the stacks of money, labeling and shrink wrapping. Security was tight and the glass walls were thick. One of the workers taunted us all by holding up a stack of money--so near, but not close enough! \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

The Smithsonian Institution was near so we viewed the Hope Diamond--beautiful--wish it could fit one or more of my fingers.. We then toured the Insect /Zoo--also viewed a huge whale--above eye level. We asked a volunteer for suggestions for lunch--she referred us to the Old Main Post office, an interesting building. We lunched and then found a metro entrance to flag the Metro and returned to our hotel--after we found a Beauty Salon (still underground) where we made an appointment for a shampoo on Thursday.

Wednesday night, Katie or Kate Hamann and husband, Brian Cohen, newly weds since August 31st, met us and drove us to another Marriott Hotel for dinner. We had a great visit and dinner (?) and then sat in the lobby to look at their albums of their wedding and honeymoon--great pictures of them and Fran, Bob and families. It was such fun to be with Kate again (she is the granddaughter of my friend, Mary Wertel and daughter of Fran Hamann LeVeque) and to meet her husband. Kate and Brian are a nice young couple--they each have much potential for their respective fields.

THURSDAY

We were bright and early on another dull day, weatherwise, and we were soon on our way to the beauty salon, where we were pampered with a shampoo and set and a manicure.

After leaving there, we found a food stand where we settled in for a bite to eat and to "people watch". We wandered underground back to the Marriott Hotel and they called the Howard Johnson Hotel van to pick us up and return us to our Hotel.

That night, we boarded a bus at 6PM and ended up at the National Guard Armory in Washington, D.C. for the WIMSA Dedication Gala. The Gala was a formal affair, with some personnel wearing their dress uniforms. The Armory and tables were beautifully decorated, each table set for 10 guests, each of us finding a WIMSA ribbon and a WIMSA key chain in boxes at our places at our table. I joined a congenial group of veterans at table 81 and Mac found her way to table 94. The armory was huge and at this point I wondered if I'd meet Mac at the program end or if I'd ever get to the right bus to get back to our hotel---luckily, it all worked out OK, even though Mac switched where we would meet so it was a game of chance! By the way, the steak fillets, plus salad etc. and dessert were very good and very excellent waitresses *SERVING US*.

The Gala Program included "Reflections" by several and more women, including Colonel Mary Hallaren, former Director of the WAC's, Nancy Giles, who played the character Frankie Bunsen in the TV series, China Beach, which dealt with the Vietnam War, and Connie Stevens, who, just recently, besides her film, TV recording and Broadway entertainment, finished production of "A Healing", a documentary feature film dedicated to women who served in the Vietnam war.. Loretta Switt or "HO" LIPS" was also present. Brigadier General Wilma Vaught welcomed the huge crowd. Remarks were made by General Joseph Ralston, USAF; Vice Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Sheila Widmalm; Secretary of the Air Force and John Hamre, Deputy of Defense. A tribute was made by Tipper Gore and Kathy Mattea was a guest performer.

It was a wonderful evening for the Women in Military Service, past and present, all thousands and thousands..

FRIDAY- Friday was another rainy and dull day. This was a day of 2 big events. The first one was an ARMY luncheon, held in Hangar #3 at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland; (Navy, AF, Coast Guard and other services held their luncheons at other buildings or hotels). When our busses arrived at the Hanger, each of us was met individually by an enlisted AF man, who offered us his arm and escorted us under an umbrella into

