

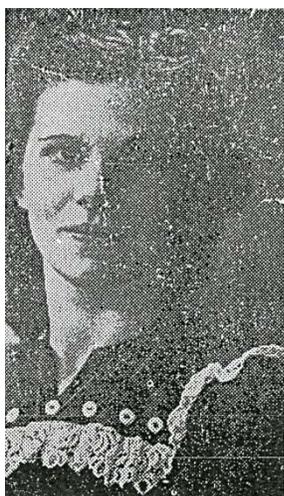
Blazing a Trail in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps

Inez Satterfield Pinnell was born in Colorado. In 1919 her family moved to High Gate, Missouri, a small town in Maries County named for the English home town of an early settler. Her tranquil, Normal Rockwell-esque life changed forever when, on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Four days later, President Roosevelt declared war and, like many of her fellow Americans, her first thoughts were what she might do to help her country win the war. This is the story of her adventure in the WAAC's as she told it.

I thought, "Why couldn't I have been a boy so I could have enlisted in the service? I wonder why they don't have a woman's organization like they do for men?" Little did I realize in a few months that very thought of a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was being discussed as something that would actually happen.

Imagine my surprise when on a Sunday afternoon in the month of August, 1942. While reading through the Sunday paper I stumbled across an article saying that the WAAC's were a reality and not just a corps to be forgotten. It stated that there were several women already going to Officer's Candidate School at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, the first WAAC training center in the United States.

Then and there I decided I would enlist soon. I wondered what my parents would think of my enlisting. I didn't have to wonder what my boyfriend, who was already in the service, would think because I had a sneaky feeling he wouldn't like it any too well. But I knew I could later convince him it was all okay.



For weeks I kept reading any information I could find about the WAAC's. Finally, I decided it might be wise and write to drop a gentle hint to my parents of my intentions. I wanted them to have time to think it over and discuss it and then give me their opinion. To my disappointment they didn't much want me to enlist, but nevertheless, if that was my wish their answer was, "It's your life and you have to live it for yourself." None

of my sisters and brothers thought too well of the idea so now I was quite undecided what to do.

A few weeks went by and still I hadn't enlisted but I couldn't get the idea out of my head. One day I resolved that to enlist was what I wanted, so enlist I did...around the first of September.

After I enlisted, little thoughts that I would regret it would enter my mind. Then when I received notice to appear for my physical and was sworn in and made Auxiliary Satterfield instead of Miss Satterfield, I knew that I would probably never regret my enlistment. There couldn't have been a much happier and more patriotic girl than I as I left the building and started on my way home to await my call to active duty.

During the days in which I waited my call to duty I pictured in my mind what the life of a WAAC would be like...the daily routine, the military discipline, etc. I was later to find out my imagination and ideas should have been larger as I had underestimated it all.



Inez Satterfield, second from right.

Inez' call to active duty was to report to Fort Des Moines, Iowa. As thrilled as she was, she was equally disappointed the next day when she received a telegram cancelling the call. She didn't have to wait long before receiving orders to report to active duty to the 2nd WAAC Training Center at Daytona Beach, Florida. Though she was thrilled to be heading to Florida, she was also afraid at the thought

of travelling alone. But on December 11, 1942 she bid her family farewell, boarding the train with other young ladies who were also starting their careers as WAAC's.

We had a grand trip down on the train together, seven happy girls all very much pleased that they were enroute to active duty. Each of us gave the others wee bits of information about army life that we had been told by someone else.

When we arrived at Jacksonville, Florida, our train was late so we had to stay over until night before going on to Daytona Beach. Our first day in the WAAC's and here we were already late reporting for duty. We sent a telegram saying our train was late. I don't know where we got the idea...evidently someone must have told us that was the proper thing to do. It was.

At 2 A.M. on December 14th we stepped off the train at our destination. We were no longer a small number because there were nearly 200 other girls from different places also reporting to duty.

The first sound we heard was, "All WAAC's line over this way, please." There we were—200 rookies laden down with luggage in a strange town which was in "dim-out." Nevertheless, they finally got us in columns of twos and we started moving. I was rather sleepy, my arms were aching from carrying a suitcase in each hand but still I stumbled forward. After what seemed hours of walking we finally arrived at a place they called "processing."

It was time to go to bed but much to my surprise they told us they would have to check us over to see who was and who wasn't there. For hours we sat while they read off name after name. Finally they gave us a card with our name and a letter on it. "Keep that card!" we were told, "And don't forget that letter on it."

I might add that they asked for my serial number and I did not know it, although I knew it wasn't something we were to have for breakfast. Finally, I read it off a piece of paper and was told to memorize it because I would be asked for it many times. For the first few weeks you are in the service, you're asked for it four or five times a day. I haven't forgotten it since.

About that time we were told the doctor wanted to check us over. One by one we lined up and opened our mouths to say, “Ah” while deep down inside of us we wanted to say, “Bah.”

As we were about to leave the building we were presented with three towels, tooth brush, and comb...my first G.I. possessions. Oh, we didn't take them without signing a little piece of paper that we received them. One has to sign their name for everything you receive, from shoestrings to bathrobes.

When we got outside there were huge army trucks parked all around. I wondered what they were doing there when all of a sudden a soldier yelled, “All right girls, get those suitcases over here and put them in the truck...on the double.” I thought, “What does he mean...I'm taking two at a time. That's double so how many more does he expect me to carry?” I later laughed when I found out what the expression meant.

I hoped deep down inside of me they knew where to take them as I didn't want to lose my luggage. Off they drove when another soldier shouted, “Girls, fill up the truck and the rest of you wait here. There will be more trucks for you in a little while.” Around four o'clock in the morning I climbed in the back of an army truck and had my first G.I. ride.

The topic of discussion as we were riding along was what our barracks would be like. When at last the truck came to a halt, we were at a hotel which I later learned was the Hotel Princess Issena. Entering the hotel, there was our luggage—several



The Hotel Princess Issena in Daytona Beach

hundred pieces—and we were told to pick the ones belonging to us. After much lifting and looking, I finally found mind and with a sigh of relief to know they hadn't got lost through the ordeal. We were then told to sit in the lobby and wait until the letter on our card was called. Around 5:00 a nice little WAAC took one of my suitcases and told me to follow her. After we got on the second

floor she took me in a room where there were five beds and told me which one was mine. By then, the other four girls were there, too.

Instead of saying, "Girls I know you're tired so you can sleep 'till noon tomorrow," she said, "All right, girls, jump in bed. It's now five, you have until 5:30 to sleep and when you hear that whistle blow I mean you'd better get up!"

Before she left she added, "By the way, you girls will have to make your bed the army way so maybe I'd better show you how before I leave." Jerking one of the cots apart, she proceeded to demonstrate how to make a G.I. bed. I would have much rather been sleeping but decided it might be well to watch as I had heard rumors about the army and their "bed-making."

Before she left, she let the girls know that in time they would be expected to be able to make up their bunks in five minutes. With an unexpected "good night," she left the girls who quickly jumped under the covers and fell asleep. Before drifting off to sleep, Inez wondered again if she'd made a mistake by joining the WAAC's. She fell quickly asleep, too tired to be angry, hoping things would look better in the morning.

A sharp blast on a whistle made me jump up and open my eyes. For a few minutes I couldn't seem to think where I was. After rubbing my eyes and looking about I remembered the events of the night before and realized that I was truly in the WAAC's now.

Five busy little girls tried to wash, brush teeth, and dress all at the same time. The first thing we learned that morning was cooperation. One would have to do one thing, while someone else did another. We had just barely got our hair combed when we again heard the whistle blow and a "fall out" was heard. I hadn't heard the expression before but I had a faint idea it meant to leave the room. We ran out into the hall where there were quite a number of sleepy looking girls. One I noticed seemed wider awake and much livelier than the rest was calling off names in alphabetical order. Later I learned she was acting as platoon sergeant.

When each girl heard her name called they shouted, "Here!" "Now girls" she said, "we are what is called a platoon and we're going to go in formation to mess.

After mess we will meet in the lobby of the hotel and come back in formation. So remember your place in the squad and see that you get back there.”

After we got outside the building, I found it was yet quite dark outside. The corporal said, “Of course, you probably haven’t marched before but we’re going to try.” After a few remarks and explanations on the basics of marching, we felt we knew all about it. When at last the command, “Platoon Attention!” was given, a thrill arose within me. As we started forward each stepping at the same time, it was a wonderful sensation, marching for the first time in my life. Occasionally, someone would get out of step or step on the heels of the individual in front of them but never could there have been a much prouder group of girls than we were that very first morning.

I was wondering what chow would be like as we were moving along. I was soon to learn that army chow wasn’t half as bad as the rumors I had heard about it. There’s no doubt but what it isn’t a better balanced menu than many of us were used to eating at home. Of course, army chow will never taste the same as those good meals Mother cooked back home. I soon learned that “bucking” a chow line meant that one might stand in line for hours moving slowly forward until at last you come to the trays and silverware. Ah, then one realized it wouldn’t be long until chow will be slung on your tray as you pass along.

I was surprised the chow tasted even better than I thought it would. And then how wonderful to pick up my dishes and carry them out for someone else to wash (but my day was coming).

We marched quietly back to our hotel and were told before we fell out of formation that we had one hour in which to make our beds and clean our room. It took me over 30 minutes to make my bunk and by the time the rest of the cleaning was done, our hour was up. The whistle blew and, “fall out” echoed down the halls. Again we stood and waited while each of our names were called to see if we were present.

After basic training, Inez went to Cooks and Bakers School. With that completed she was given the rank of T-5 Corporal. Her class stayed on in Daytona Beach,

replacing the men personnel who trained them. As men went off to war, Rosie the Riveter became the symbol of women's entry into the workforce to replace them in factories and assembly lines. In an ironic twist, Inez' platoon of WAACS took over the traditionally feminine tasks of food preparation to free the men to go out in the field.

Every six weeks a new group of WAAC's arrived for training, after which time they were transferred to other locations. Inez finished her story with a simple, "*It was a great experience for me.*"

