

1LT LOUISE CAREY ROCKEY EVANS¹
WAAC/WAC, 1942-1946, Serial No. L903406, U.S.A. and England

Louise Carey Rockey was born in Portland, Oregon, in November 1921. Her family had lived in Portland for three generations. Her maternal grandfather, Judge Charles H. Carey, was a noted lawyer, author and historian; her paternal grandfather, Dr. Alpha Eugene Rockey, an early Portland physician.

Carey was graduated from Scripps College in Claremont, California, in June 1942, majoring in sculpture. During spring vacation in 1942 she returned to Portland for a short time. She visited her family's beach house in Gearhart. There she saw barbed wire strung all along the beach as a defense against an invasion by Japanese submarines and troops.

She wanted to join the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) but was unable to do so because she was not yet 21. After graduation from Scripps, to mark time until her November birthday, she attended the San Francisco School of Fine Arts. She signed up in San Francisco for the WAAC on 2 December 1942, receiving a call-up in January 1943. Carey was quite put out by the delay. She had urged one of her best friends, Carol Mount,² to join; Carol, a year older than Carey, enlisted in September 1942.

Carey's reasons for joining were twofold. Her grandfather Dr. A. E. Rockey; her father Dr. Eugene Rockey; and her uncle Dr. Paul Rockey all served in the medical corps in World War I (the brothers were stationed overseas). After the Pearl Harbor attack, her father volunteered to serve in the 46th General Hospital, a medical unit reactivated in 1942 at the University of Oregon Medical School.³ To his dismay, Dr. Rockey was rejected because of a thereto undiscovered heart condition.⁴

Carey's second reason was simply that she wanted to be in on the action.

Her eight-week basic training was at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. After basic, because she was a college graduate, she was sent to Officers' Candidate School (OCS), also at Fort Des Moines. She describes the unpleasant climate in the area as, depending on the season, a bone-chilling -35°; unbearably hot and humid; or knee-deep in gummy mud.

¹ By C. Clark Leone, © 2015.

² Carolyn Mount Clark was interviewed by Alisha Hamel, Executive Director of the Historical Outreach Foundation, in March 2014. Carol and Carey are lifelong friends. They grew up together; their parents were very close; and both are 1942 Scripps College graduates (Carol is a year older than Carey – Carey skipped fifth grade).

³ Carol Clark's father, (LTC) Dr. Frank R. Mount, was the Executive Officer of the 46th General, serving under (COL) Dr. J. Guy Strohm. See <http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/ark:/99166/w65g1b89> (Jun. 2015).

⁴ Despite his own service, Carey's father was very much opposed to Carey's joining the military. Of course, Carey did so anyway. (The author discovered that Carey had red hair when young, a fact that may in part account for her independent spirit.)

The eight weeks of OCS consisted of an assortment of training programs such as military customs and courtesy; marching; military sanitation; first aid; map reading; company administration; supply; interior guard; and mess management (in other words, similar to basic training). Upon graduation as a Second Lieutenant, Carey was assigned to the Third Regiment at Fort Des Moines as a company officer. Her job was to assist fellow officers in the basic training of new recruits.

Both white and African-American women were trained at Fort Des Moines. During Carey's time there, she saw no black enlisted recruits mix with white recruits, for training or otherwise.⁵ And of course service clubs, theaters, beauty shops and the like were segregated as to race for both recruits and officer candidates. It was a slightly different story with female officers.

Coming from the Pacific Northwest, Carey had had little interaction with black Americans. Her sole experience was knowing the mayor of Gearhart (where the Rockeys' beach house was) who was black. At Fort Des Moines, she was assigned as one of her roommates an African-American officer,⁶ for whom she had great respect. When it came to choosing who would take which bunk, Carey, being younger, chose the upper bunk, thoughtfully leaving the lower bunk to her older bunkmate.

One incident brought home to Carey how African-Americans were treated in this country. She and her roommate took a train to Chicago; they sat with one another and had a fine trip. When they arrived, Carey suggested they find a restaurant and eat dinner. Her fellow officer refused, saying blacks could not eat with whites, and that was that.

Carey recalled how frustrated she was with the recruits she drilled on the parade ground. All of them, she said, had two left feet. She would point out the perfect marching of the black platoons and ask her recruits why they couldn't march like that.

Eleanor Roosevelt visited Fort Des Moines in February 1943 while Carey was there.⁷ It was the first time Carey saw the enormous garrison flag displayed. Everyone was to be lined up in ranks on the parade ground; the uniform of the day was heavy overcoats and buckled-up galoshes on account of the cold weather. As it happened (Iowa weather being capricious), the day was quite warm. One by one, the troops began fainting from overheating. In order to keep Mrs. Roosevelt from seeing the WAACs' distress, Carey quietly escorted each in turn to the back ranks, thereby missing the First Lady's talk entirely.

⁵ Carey's observation comports with various articles about segregation between races for enlisted recruits, e.g., <http://www.womensmemorial.org/Education/BBH1998.html#4> (Jul. 2015).

⁶ Carey's situation belies the then usual living arrangements for black and white WAAC officer candidates. *Ibid.* Black officer candidates did, however, attend classes and mess with white officer candidates, <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/wac/wac.htm> (Jul. 2015).

⁷ https://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?_y=1943&_f=md056423 (Jul. 2015).

Carey's next duty station, in late spring of 1943, was the Army Administration School located at Eastern Kentucky State Teachers' College in Richmond, Kentucky (about 30 miles southeast of Lexington). Her duties included inspecting quarters;⁸ arranging for entertainment and meeting the USO performers when they arrived;⁹ standing rotational Military Police (MP) duty in Lexington; and serving as mess officer.

The mess was run by civilian contractors, so Carey had few duties as the mess officer. One situation she handled occurred when the butcher was jailed for some infraction, likely being drunk. A hanging half-carcass of beef needed cutting up for the next meal. Carey knew how,¹⁰ so in 90-degree heat and 90% humidity, she butchered the carcass.

Kentucky was the right place for a horse lover to be stationed. One day in her off hours, Carey was given the chance to ride any horse in a stable. She chose a handsome Tennessee Walker stallion (his stablemates were all "plugs", in her opinion). She put him in a snaffle-bitted bridle, cinched up an English saddle, and led him into a field. No one in the amazed, gathering crowd had warned her that the stallion was considered a bad-tempered outlaw and that he'd bucked off even seasoned cowboys. While at first the horse did buck a little and reared a time or two, otherwise he behaved well, and she rode him almost daily afterward. Carey chalks up his good behavior to her being "young and dumb". Other factors were doubtless her gentle touch and the fact that he was cooped up in his small stall unless he toured the countryside with her on his back.

It was while stationed in eastern Kentucky that she saw the other side of life. When patrolling Lexington as an MP, she saw the red light district and the city jail's drunk tank (no WAACs were ever found in either one). Poverty was rampant. Children had very few clothes and went barefoot; many men were crippled from coal mine injuries and unable to work. Bad booze brewed by bootleggers (Madison County was a dry county at that time) caused deaths and illness in the civilian population.

Unchallenged by the somewhat mundane tasks given WACs,¹¹ Carey put in to go overseas. In the winter of 1944 in New York City¹² she boarded *Queen Mary* for Great

⁸ Her most vivid recollection during those inspections is of the huge, lively cockroaches that dropped from the ceilings and crunched beneath her feet.

⁹ Carey is a long-time animal lover and had a horse at an early age (she continues to ride a horse to this day). She was no city kid. During one of the USO shows, a performer parodied walking through a cow pasture. Only Carey and one other officer understood the mime and were the only ones who laughed uproariously.

¹⁰ OCS had provided a 20-minute or so program on cuts of meat; moreover, Carey had cut up wild game her father hunted.

¹¹ The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was converted to the Women's Army Corps (WAC) on July 1, 1943.

Britain. Nearly 15,000 troops were aboard. The stabilizers did not function, hence the crossing was extremely rough. All water aboard that was not used for cooking or drinking was sea water. Fourteen officers were assigned to a stateroom, where they slept in wooden bunks stacked three high. The WACs ate their meals on a roof that covered the swimming pool. The cooks were English, and the food was spooned in one great heap into each person's mess kit.

Although *Queen Mary* was faster than German U-boats, she was chased by one, so the ship sailed north of the Arctic Circle, safely landing in Gourock, Scotland (northwest of Glasgow). Carey took a train to London, where she was lodged in an impressive home at 10 Charles Street in Mayfair, the most posh London neighborhood, between Hyde Park and Buckingham Palace. The home¹³ was owned by a wealthy American married to an Englishman; the owner gave over its use to female American officers during the war. Carey would stay in this house whenever she spent the night in London.

Two weeks later she was assigned to Headquarters (HQ), Ninth Air Force Bomber Command in Earls Colne, Essex (about 60 miles NE of London).¹⁴ The Command flew primarily Martin B-26 Marauders (medium bombers) and A-23 light bombers. She had very little seniority and was an administrative officer.

She was billeted in a "Nissen hut", similar to a Quonset hut, and her office was in a nearby Nissen hut. Outside of them was a large trench. The troops were to leap out the doors and windows, and into the trench, if bombs were heard overhead. Bombs fell frequently because these living quarters were close to Earls Cone Airfield, and airfields were favorite targets of the German Luftwaffe. She bicycled to the mess hall, a half-mile away on the other side of the airfield, at Marks Hall – a Jacobean, and later Elizabethan, country house – where the Command's HQ was located.

Early on, on many Army posts, WAACs – especially enlisted personnel, despite their educations or skills as clerk-typists, radio operators, cryptographers, linguists, etc. – were given permanent menial assignments such as dining room orderlies; filling civilian jobs in laundries; pushing food carts; and performing garbage rack details. COL Olveta Culp Hobby put an end to that. See https://books.google.com/books?id=TEwchEZ57OsC&pg=PA545&lpg=PA545&dq=WAACs+at+fort+knox+during+wwii&source=bl&ots=QFzCOaf67T&sig=Ed_UJpigzgphbh3D0Q1UFvBrGrO&hl=en&sa=X&ei=RqOIVdyqA4rtsAW24auADg&ved=0CCEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=WAACs%20at%20fort%20knox%20during%20wwii&f=false at p. 545 (Jun. 2015).

¹² After Richmond, she was, for very short times, in Louisville, where she was assigned no duties, and Georgia, where troops were assembled to be sent by troop train to New York City and then on to England by boat. Just before leaving New York, Carey mailed Carol Mount her heavy issue overcoat, figuring she wouldn't need it in England. Carol was most grateful (and still owns the overcoat).

¹³ One night, a local cat gave birth to kittens on her bed.

¹⁴ Although Carey has periodically kept a diary throughout her life, she did not keep one while overseas. She and her colleagues were ordered not to because it might fall into German hands. For once, and unfortunately for posterity, she took a warning seriously.

Carey managed to incur the wrath of the military chaplain on base and got a good tongue-lashing from him. Upon request of its crew, she had painted a picture of a nude (or at least scantily clad) woman on the nose of a B-26.¹⁵ The image was not painted over, nor was clothing added to it, because “that plane didn’t last long.”¹⁶



Marks Hall, HQ of the Ninth Air Force Bomber Command. Few original buildings remain; the large mansion, first built in 1163, was demolished in 1950 due to disrepair. Much renovation was done in the 1970s and '80s, and it is now an arboretum. The nearby Earls Colne Airfield is a golf course and private airstrip; the outline of the WWII runways and perimeter are visible from the air.

Beginning in May 1944, curious events began to occur. The Command’s planes had black and white stripes painted around their wings and fuselages.¹⁷ During that month her job was to type up countless equipment lists. All personnel were restricted to quarters until further notice. Everyone walked on eggs. On June 5, an officer said he

¹⁵ The “nose art” on the vast majority of WWII bombers (B-26, B-24, B-17, etc.) was of nude or semi-nude females. Doubtless the chaplain was outraged because Carey, a woman, had painted this particular nude.

¹⁶ Until the aerodynamics were redesigned, B-26s were called “widowmakers” owing to their high accident rates, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_B-26_Marauder (Feb. 2016).

¹⁷ Called “invasion markings” or “D-Day stripes”, these distinctive markings were required by an Operation Memorandum issued in April 1944 to be painted on all aircraft except heavy bombers, gliders, night fighters and a few others. The purpose was to reduce friendly fire incidents. As it turned out, these markings also made it easier for Nazi anti-aircraft gunners to spot these planes; D-Day stripes were ordered removed by the end of 1944, <http://www.quora.com/Why-were-Allied-aircraft-painted-with-black-and-white-stripes-for-D-day> (Jun. 2015).

could drink no liquor because of “big training tonight.” Carey and others had suspected for several weeks that an invasion of France was at hand; the next morning, 6 June 1944, it was clear that D-Day had arrived when the bombers took off at 5:00 a.m.

Shortly after D-Day, the Nazis began launching their new V-1 flying bombs at London and environs. Carey particularly remembers their distinct putt-putt-putt or buzzing sound, and when the engine cut out, you hoped it was well past you, because in a few seconds it would hit the ground with a tremendously destructive explosion.

Following D-Day, her company was sent to France, but she was left behind. Cary was reassigned to the 8th Air Force at RAF Horsham St. Faith near Norwich¹⁸ on England’s east coast (about 120 miles northeast of London), the home of B-24 heavy bombers.

There, she was attached to the 96th Combat Bombardment Wing, 2nd Air Division, 8th Air Force. As operations officers, Carey and three other WACs performed administrative work, such as keeping track of where the aircraft were. The other WACs were 1LT Ruth Rose Johnson (1916-1992); 2LT Dorothea Joanne Affronte (1917-1983); and 2LT Virginia Nye Justy (1910-?).¹⁹ Carey stayed in touch with Ruth Johnson and Joanne Affronte for a time after the war. Ruth was a teacher from Oregon; Joanne was from New Jersey. Justy, the oldest of the four, had divorced a band leader because she was tired of the constant travel and hotel living. She then joined the Army, while her ex-husband moved to Hollywood where he became a music arranger.

The four WACs were billeted in the back part of a larger building, the front of which housed some function such as offices or the base exchange. Their cooking facility was a hotplate on which they brewed hot chocolate. They had three rooms: one contained two sets of bunk beds; another was a little bathroom; and the third was a small parlor. The parlor housed a tiny, inefficient stove that ran on coke. The WACs’ coke allotment was minuscule. They found that they could increase their allotment, and thereby the temperature, by liberating coke from the establishment in the front of the building.

Carey was on duty in the operations office on 18 August 1944 when a pilot named Charles S. “Sam” Evans miraculously landed his B-24 with a broken wing on an emergency runway at RAF Woodbridge about 40 miles south of Horsham (CPT Evans was returning from a bomb run over France).²⁰ Carey remembers that MAJ Robert H.

¹⁸ German V-2 rockets hit Norwich a time or two. These rockets caused even more destruction than did their predecessors the V-1 flying bombs. Carey said you could not hear them coming, but had a feeling one was on the way. She thought perhaps it was the change in air pressure. Video of V-1 flying bomb launch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNgS6Taorto> (Oct. 2015); video of V-2 rocket launch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjSPs5noguQ> (Oct. 2015).

¹⁹ <http://www.458bg.com/alphabetical-listing> (Aug. 2015); each of the four WACs is listed alphabetically by last name under “Ground men”.

²⁰ An account of CPT Evans’ military service accompanies this document.

Hinckley, the Command Pilot²¹ who was riding in the co-pilot's seat, personally reported the event to those in the operations office. He was initially given credit, but vigorously refused and insisted that the successful landing was all CPT Evans' doing.

In the fall of 1944, flying was reduced enough that four WACs were not needed in the operations office. Carey was transferred in October to RAF Burtonwood²² in Warrington, halfway between Manchester and Liverpool on the west coast, and about 170 air miles northwest of Norwich.

At Burtonwood, she was promoted to First Lieutenant and appointed mess officer (one of her jobs was to censor all letters written by her staff). She overheard an enlisted serviceman remark to another, "Well, we got us a new mess officer and it's a damn lady." More than 3,500 meals were prepared and served every 24 hours.

She had an excellent mess sergeant working for her. She let MSGT Bernard Robbins do his job and never had to get involved in the day-to-day details. She respected him enough that she stayed in touch with him and his wife until he died when in his 80s.

Carey was invited to parties at the Bachelor Officers' Quarters, but the men were all much older and she didn't drink. An event showing her quick thinking and ability occurred one night when she got a call that an enlisted man was in the mess, threatening the staff with a knife. The staff dove for hiding places (mainly in the cupboards). Carey showed up to find the very drunk, would-be combatant marching around the mess hall, wielding a large knife. She fell in step with him and marched until he tired and gave her the knife.

During her service in England, Carey, always wanting to be in on the action, flew on as many different military aircraft as there were pilots willing to take her. She would often ask a random pilot (not necessarily one she knew) if he would take her up. The Air Corps officers assigned to HQ, Ninth Bomber Command, at Earls Cote, were temporarily desk pilots who wanted to keep their flying skills current. Thus Carey rode with them on their practice/training flights in B-26s and in the two-seater Piper Cub. They allowed her to fly, but not take off or land, the Cub; she did not fly the B-26s because those aircraft were fast and devilishly difficult to handle.

At RAF Horsham St. Faith, not only was she occasionally able to hitch rides on practice/training flights in B-24s, but also she shoehorned her way onto a "truckin'" flight

²¹ The Command Pilot is a passenger aboard the aircraft that leads the squadron (which consists of several B-24s). He commands the squadron, while the pilot of the aircraft that the Command Pilot is aboard is in charge of that particular aircraft.

²² Burtonwood was the supply and maintenance base for the Army Air Corps' European operations during WWII, providing new bombers and fighters, and modifying and repairing them. http://www.bbc.co.uk/liverpool/localhistory/journey/american_connection/burtonwood/intro/facts.shtml (Oct. 2015).

to Lille, France, ferrying gasoline to the fuel-starved tanks of General Patton's Third Army. She remembers that the hour spent unloading on French soil was boring – she did not leave the plane – because there was nothing and no one nearby to investigate. Moreover, she didn't want to invite trouble by being spotted by someone in authority. The most exciting part of the flight was seeing flak to the north (but not near her plane) on the return trip. She tried, "Of course!", to ride along in the Bomb Group's assembly plane, *SPOTTED APE*, when it formed up individual combat squadrons on mission days. She quickly learned that a rule existed barring non-flying personnel from accompanying *SPOTTED APE* on those flights. No such rule applied to the "truckin'" flights to France because "no one had thought to make a rule against it."

At RAF Burtonwood, she flew in B-17 Flying Fortresses a time or two. As the war was winding down, she rode in a C-47 (the military version of the Douglas DC-3) that was headed to Kassel, in central Germany, with Red Cross personnel aboard to retrieve about 30 wounded American soldiers. No one talked about the injuries or how the men were injured; all of them were, however, ambulatory. Carey chatted with them and they exchanged small souvenirs.

Carey and Sam Evans had met before Sam's near-death landing on 18 August, but they didn't know each other well. Afterward, while she was still stationed at Horsham, they began seeing each other.²³ One date he arranged particularly impressed her. Sam took her to a dance in Norwich at the Samson and Hercules dance hall²⁴ one afternoon. They cut a rug until the hall closed that night. As they left, Sam pulled out a flashlight to guide them home. Carey was quite surprised by his planning because he hadn't told her that they would dance the entire night away.

Upon Carey's transfer to Burtonwood, they visited as often as they could. Carey would take the train to London where she would meet Sam, or from London on to Horsham (Norwich) where they would meet. She would do the reverse to return to Burtonwood (Warrington). Sam and a few of his crew members once tried to fly her from Horsham to Burtonwood in a B-24. The weather was so bad over the Burtonwood airfield that after circling it for about 20 minutes, he flew back to Horsham, meaning that Carey had to take trains, via London, back to her base.

Sam returned to the states in February or March of 1945, having completed his 30 missions. This did not end his military obligation, however. He was sent to Hamilton Field north of San Francisco where he was re-trained to fly Douglas C-54 Skymasters.²⁵

²³ Carey's three WAC roommates at Horsham thought Sam extremely handsome, comparing him to Gary Cooper. MSGT Robbins, her mess sergeant at Burtonwood, asked Carey if Sam was good looking. Carey replied that she didn't know because she had paid little attention to his looks.

²⁴ Samson and Hercules, also called "Muscles Hall" by Allied troops, has a long history in Norwich, <https://shinealightproject.wordpress.com/2014/07/25/samson-and-hercules-icons-of-norwich/> (Feb. 2016).

²⁵ These were the aircraft that Americans flew to get food, water and other supplies into West Berlin during the 13-month long Berlin Airlift in 1948-1949. The Soviets, controlling East Germany in the

Sam flew supplies to points in the Pacific (and Japan, following the Japanese surrender). After his discharge in the fall of 1945, he returned to Texas where he resumed his studies and completed his second year of college at the University of Texas. Carey says Sam wanted to be sure he could support his bride when she finally returned from England and was discharged.

Carey herself did not have an easy time getting out of the Army. She happened to be in London on V-J Day (Victory in Japan, 14 August 1945) – the Yanks were ecstatic (the Brits were enthusiastic). By this time, her father, whom she calls something of a hypochondriac, desperately wanted her home because he was convinced he would soon die from heart problems. Carey learned that a medical discharge would get her home more quickly than anything else. Declaring simply that she wanted to go home, she was consigned to the psychiatric ward of a hospital in Malvern near the border of Wales. A nurse announced almost immediately that Carey did not belong there. Carey then said she had a bad knee (which she did), and was at last sent to the states in a hospital ship (a converted freighter). It was a rough crossing owing to a hurricane that the ship encountered.²⁶

After arriving in New York City, Carey was sent to a military hospital in the San Francisco area. There, her bad knee was declared a minor problem. While in the hospital, she met and spoke with other patients who had arrived from the Pacific front – many of whom had been Japanese POWs. Thus she learned what had happened in the war in the Pacific. She was at last discharged and was home in Portland for Christmas, 1945, although the official discharge paperwork didn't come through until January 1946.

Sam and Carey were married 6 September 1946 in Portland. They moved to Richmond, California, to finish college. He obtained his bachelor's degree in liberal arts at the University of California at Berkeley; she earned a Master of Fine Arts, also at Berkeley. Taking advantage of the GI Bill, they lived on stipends of \$125 per month each. In 1949 they settled, and have since resided, in Portland.

middle of which West Berlin sat, blocked the Allies' railway, road and canal access, so the only way to support the population of 2,500,000 was by air.

²⁶ Carey was not seasick on this voyage. She was seasick once on *Queen Mary*, though, because Air Corps officers fed her what turned out to be speed pills either to help her stay awake or to help avoid seasickness – in any event, the pills made her seasick for several days.



Graduation, Scripps College, June 1942



Mess officer, RAF Burtonwood, England, 1944



Riding *Reece's Billy Allen*, Richmond, Kentucky, 1943



Carey and Sam Evans, Portland, Oregon, 2001