

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Margery Steele

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VR2-A-L-2008-058

Margery Steele, a cryptographer for the Office of Strategic Services during WW II, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: September 8, 2008 Location: Steele farm in rural Dover, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 37 Total Time: 1 hr 33 min / 1.55 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 10/01/2008.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Margery Steele, *Veterans Remember*, VR2-A-L-2008-058

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Margery Whiteley was born on July 17th, 1920 in Michigan City, Indiana. When she was still very young, her parents divorced and soon afterward, an apartment fire precipitating a move east. Marion, Margery's mother, found work in New York City, and sent Margery and her younger sister to St. Joseph's Hill Academy, a Catholic boarding school on Staten Island. The three older boys were sent to a different boarding school in Arocar, on Staten Island. Following the stock market crash in 1929, the children moved to a small house in Woodstock, New York while their mother continued to work in New York City in a variety of job, traveling to Woodstock on weekends. Margery graduated from High School in 1937, then moved to New York City to find work.

In 1942, following Pearl Harbor, Margery found employment with the U.S. Air Force doing clerical work. In July of 1944 she took a job with the Office of Strategic Services. She trained to be a cryptographer in Washington, D.C., then was sent to North Africa, arriving in Algiers in September, 1944. Margery was reassigned to Cairo, Egypt in October 1944. She oversaw several cryptographers encoding and decoding messages received from the U.S.A., Europe and the China-Burma-India theater of operations. In November, 1945 Margery was relocated to Athens, Greece where she continued to perform cryptographic duties during the Greek Civil War, sometimes decoding messages from agents located in Communist countries. In June of 1946 she quit the OSS, and moved with friends to Vienna, Austria, where she worked for the U.S. Army. She met her future husband, Captain Harold Steele (Infantry & CID), on a blind date. The two were married while in Austria on October 12th, 1946. Margery passed away on June 20th, 2013.

Subject Headings/Key Words: St. Joseph's Hill Academy Boarding School; Woodstock, New York in the 1930s; growing up in a single parent household during the depression; German pen pal during 1930s; Pearl Harbor; Office of War Information; Office of Strategic Services; cryptography during WW II; life in Egypt during WW II; VE Day celebrations; life in Athens, Greece following the war; Greek Civil War; life in post-war Vienna, Austria; Harold Steele

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