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Williams, Eva Mae - no date (press release re.: Eva Mae Williams)

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"Flying Home," the GI's favorite, was the last record played by Eva Mae Williams, American Red Cross clubmobile worker, before she left her unit at Noyon, France, in April on an emergency furlough. Called to her home in Washington, D.C., by the serious illness of her father, Miss Williams is now working at national headquarters in the Communications Section of the Correspondents' Unit, American Red Cross.

"I like my work here," she said, with a gesture toward the correspondence on her desk -- correspondence that meant emergency messages from servicemen to their families and frantic replies from home via the overseas Red Cross field directors.

"But I'd give anything to go back to my GI's."

She misses the thrill of throaty glad cries from the engineers, quartermaster corpamen and combat infantry troops as she would ride up to their camp in her "House on Wheels."

Running full speed they would yell, "Come on, men! Here are the doughnut girls!" And then the gramophone would begin, the coffee would be poured into heavy white mugs from the thermos-lined urns, and banter would be tossed back and forth as the boys started off with "Where you from?"

Miss Williams was one of three girls who staffed her clubmobile unit in England and France for 15 months. Lois Browne and Mary Divers, both of Knoxville, Tenn., were her team mates during the entire period, and it was with regret that Eva Mae left them when they went on into Germany as she turned her face toward home.

"We arrived in Suffolk on a cold, damp, foggy day in January of 1944," she reminisced. "We were stationed in a little place near Beyton, in the Tostock area..."
adjourning camps of the 1516th Quartermaster Battalion, Aviation, Mobile. For over a year we served the same men, and after D-Day, when we went to Cherbourg, we rejoined the same outfit."

While in England, the girls covered approximately 30 miles each day. They would prepare their doughnuts and coffee before they started out, making up from 100 to 150 pounds of flour daily. The thermos urns held 120 gallons of coffee, and sometimes it would give out before all the men were served.

"I loved that House on Wheels," she said, her eyes shining, "even the autographs the boys wrote all over it. We would make them scrub off their names and addresses, of course, but the next day it would be all to go through again. They would write their sweethearts' names, their wives' addresses, anything that popped into their heads."

The girls were in England when it was being attacked with robot bombs, and the boys were particularly appreciative of the clubmobile following these hair-raising attacks.

"We never stayed more than an hour, but that hour left its effect for the rest of the day," Miss Williams continued. "The officers said they got twice the work out of the men when we came.

"Sometimes we would arrive just after chow; again it would be in the middle of the afternoon, but the men were always allowed to stop work and take the opportunity for a break in the day's routine. Often the GI's would put on extemporaneous programs. We had a microphone so their voices would carry, and they seemed to enjoy these impromptu shows as much as professional entertainment."

In France on the Normandy beachhead, the girls had to use a weapons carrier, a type of army truck, and they did their own driving for the first two months over the roughest terrain any of them had ever seen. Later they were assigned a GI driver. Their first station was a little village named Le Molay, where they were billeted in the American Red Cross Club of which Miss Pericles McDuffie was director. No running water or modern conveniences eased their difficulties, but they learned the French equivalent for "There's a war on" -- "C'est la guerre!"
"I think we were more appreciated in France than in England," Miss Williams said. "Most of the GI's don't know any language except English, and to hear us talk in their native tongue was 'wonderful,' according to what they said. "Also, French girls helped out in the club, making the doughnuts the night before, so we had only the coffee to make in the morning." When asked whether she didn't get tired of the constant round of doughnuts and the smell of their cooking, she grinned cheerfully.

"I got so I didn't eat very many," she admitted, "but the odor never bothered me. And apparently the boys never got tired of them; we never had any to throw away!"

Miss Williams and her group got to Cherbourg in the latter part of October, though their old Quartermaster outfit had gone ahead, in August, and replacements had filled their quarters in England.

"It was wonderful to see all the men again, even in such depressing surroundings," Miss Williams explained. "Cherbourg and the Normandy peninsular made me think of something out of H.G. Wells, in spite of the efforts that had been made, by the time we got there, to erase the damage of the invasion.

"Prison stockades were filled with German prisoners, and some of them were used to clear up the roads."

At Noyon, France, where the girls were stationed near an infantry replacement depot, they would serve the boys as they left for Germany -- all in marvelous spirits.

Miss Williams just missed seeing her brother Avery both in England and in France. He took his training at Camp Hood, Texas, and went overseas in September, 1944.

The youngest of a family of six, Miss Williams is a graduate of Dunbar High School and Howard University, Washington, D. C.