

Interviewee: Edith Houghton
Interviewer: Holly Sinco
Date: November 17, 2004
Location: Oral History Office, Via Telephone
Transcribed by: Holly Sinco
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Sinco: Okay. Okay. Just for our own records, I'm going to remind you, Ms. Houghton that I am taping this conversation and do I have your permission to tape this conversation?

Houghton: Yes.

Sinco: Okay. Today is November 17th and Holly Sinco is interviewing, would you please state your name:

Houghton: Edith Houghton

Sinco: And will you please state the date of your birth.

Houghton: February the 10th 1912.

Sinco: Okay. Great. Okay, well, as I told you on the phone I am interested in your experiences during World War II. But I am also interested to hear about your before the war experiences. I know that you were very involved in athletics and so if you want to start, maybe, a few years before the war and just tell me who you were and what you were doing.

Houghton: Well, I'd been in baseball since I was about nine years old. I was a mascot for the Philadelphia Police and I played with many, many teams then. And, I, well, it goes way back. I heard that there was a girl's team playing at Fairmont Park which is a mile from my home in Philadelphia. Very nice place. And I went out there to see what

was going on and if I knew anyone. I just happened to know one of the girl's that was playing, it was Edith Ruth, and I had seen her play at one of the playground leagues. So I talked with her and I said, you know, I wanted to play. And as I say, I was only nine years old then. So well I worked out with her team and I was asked to stay. And eventually I played with the Philadelphia Bobbies, that happened to be the team, the Philadelphia Bobbies, from there on. And we went on to Japan in 1925, and I played a few games with them after that, but then I left the team and went with other teams.

Sinco: Okay, okay. Now what was that like being in Japan at that point?

Houghton: Well, I was thirteen years old then, and it was fascinating, really, I wondered how I was going to get out of school so the principal and teachers talked with my parents and said that I'd get more out of that; being in a country that I wasn't familiar with, than being in school. So that's how I got out of school.

Sinco: Okay. And so your parent's were supportive?

Houghton: Yes, very much so.

Sinco: And how long were you in Japan?

Houghton: We left, I guess, let me see, in September. I guess we were gone about four months and on the way out to the coast to the Pacific coast, from Philadelphia to Chicago then from Chicago on out to the west coast, there were games that were arranged for us to play. Against men, so from there we went out to Seattle Washington and stayed there a few days and what have you. And then boarded a ship to Yokahoma.

Sinco: Okay. Okay. And who did you stay with when you were in Japan?

Houghton: Well, we stayed in the hotels.

Sinco: Okay. Alright. And were you successful, did you win? [chuckles]

Houghton: Oh we won a few. I can't remember how many we won.

Sinco: Yeah

Houghton: But at many games one of our players, Nettie Gans, recorded a lot of those things. I guess she knew what was going on, she was older than I. And I think she recorded how many games we won, lost, and so on. But I didn't do any of that, I was more interested in just playing.

Sinco: And how was the situation for you and your family during the Depression?

Houghton: In '29?

Sinco: Uh huh.

Houghton: Well, it didn't annoy me, let me say that. We had plenty to eat and I kept playing ball, but the Depression had nothing to do with my ball playing – everyone helped out.

Sinco: Uh huh. Did you, were you still in school?

Houghton: Mmmhhmmm. Yep.

Sinco: Did you go all the way through high school?

Houghton: Yeah.

Sinco: Okay. Okay. Alright. And before the war started, what were your plans for life? Do you remember what your goals were?

Houghton: I didn't have any goals. I was so interested in playing ball or any sport. I participated in a lot of different sports. While in high school I won a tennis championship. I also played field hockey with the Temple University Saturday morning Hockey Team.

Sinco: Did you go to college?

Houghton: No.

Sinco: Okay.

Houghton: Only time was when I joined the Navy and they sent me to the University of Indiana.

Sinco: Okay, okay. And where were you when Pearl Harbor happened?

Houghton: I happened to be in New York City. A friend of mine and I were going over there to visit a friend who was a nurse. And she was working in New York City, so we went over there on that Sunday morning. Then, I don't remember whether we saw her first, or we had gone to church, to the Cathedral; the Episcopal Cathedral there and then we came out. And we got in the car and I had a radio in the car and they announced that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. So that was a... that was quite a thing.

Sinco: Right. And what was your initial reaction? Surprise? But did you immediately think, "I'm going to enlist" or...

Houghton: Yes, to do something.

Sinco: Oh yeah. That was your first thought.

Houghton: Mmmhhmmm.

Sinco: Okay. Did you have any family members that were in the military?

Houghton: I had some nephews. See I was the youngest in the family. I sort of palled around with more of my nephews and nieces than I did my own sisters and brothers

Sinco: Ohhh. Yeah. That makes sense.

Houghton: So I had, yeah, I had a few, a nephew who lives in Knoxville Tennessee, he was in the Army. Then my other nephew, Ernie, he was in the combat engineers and saw a lot of action. One time he wrote he was glad he didn't have a son to go through what he and his outfit were going through; also two nephews from Massachusetts were in the Marine Corps and saw plenty of action.

Sinco: And what made you decide to... or when did you enlist? Did you enlist immediately after...

Houghton: Well, the Navy, the WAVES, they hadn't - they weren't prepared to enlist the girls. [inserted: Enlisted September 24, 1942]

Sinco: Right.

Houghton: Cause they weren't set up for that. So when it was first announced that there would be women in the Navy, that was be July 30th 1942. So then when I heard that I could have gone into the Army, but I didn't want the Army so I joined the... well, I first asked for an application. So they sent me all the information and then told me to come downtown and then I took the test and passed the test. And then all the other instructions that we had.

Sinco: Why didn't you want to go into the Army? Did you have a reason?

Houghton: No, no. No reason other than I just preferred the Navy over the Army, I don't know why.

Sinco: Just said, "Army? No." [laughs]

Houghton: No, no. It didn't matter. Maybe had they taken me it wouldn't have made any difference. But I didn't apply. [laughs]

Sinco: Uh huh. What did your family think of your enlistment?

Houghton: Well, they weren't surprised. They weren't surprised at anything I ever did.

Sinco: [laughs]

Houghton: They knew I was going to do something cause I had been to Japan and I couldn't imagine the Japanese doing this to us.

Sinco: Right.

Houghton: That hurt more than anything because they were very polite and very nice to us when we were in Japan. We just, well, it was a shame that it happened that is all.

Sinco: Yeah. I agree. Okay, were you involved with anyone in a relationship at that point?

Houghton: No.

Sinco: Okay. Alright. Did any of your friends enlist?

Houghton: Oh yeah, quite a few; Army, Marine Corp and the Navy, yeah.

Sinco: Okay. Where was your training done?

Houghton: Well, I left at... let me start here, the Navy needed certain rates. Do you know what I'm talking about, by rates? Yeoman, Store Keepers and so on. I don't know if you are familiar with that... Well, anyhow those were the rates they needed immediately to release the men for active duty, for no, ship duty. So when I took my test they classified me as "Store Keeper" now that's accounting and so on. Are you familiar with the Navy?

Sinco: I'm not too familiar, no.

Houghton: Well, anyhow then I was classified and I had my orders to go to Bloomington, Indiana with a group from Philadelphia and that area. So we went out there to the University of Indiana, to study become store-keepers in the Navy, so we were there from beginning of October until February the 2nd, I think.

Sinco: Okay. And what did you, were you working or training?

Houghton: Out there?

Sinco: Uh huh, in Indiana.

Houghton: Working, we were a school, preparing for our rates, see. Okay?

Sinco: And what kind of classes were they? Was it all day? Kind of intense?

Houghton: Well, we, yeah, early morning and right on through, classes and drilling but mostly classes because this is what the Navy needed. And then anyhow, and I had my

orders and, well, I graduated and became a Store Keeper Third Class. Now that's equal to Sergeant in the Army, are you familiar with the Army?

Sinco: Mmmmmm

Houghton: Okay. That's equal to Sergeant. I first was a Seamen, so when I finished school and passed I came out as a third class petty officer. So then I had my orders to go to the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts in Washington and was assigned to procurement of WAVES and Navy Nurse clothing. And that's a big buying department, a big, big, buying department like well, you're familiar with Burdines and all that.

Sinco: Mmmhmmm.

Houghton: Well Burdines would have one central buying depart... er, section and that would maybe be New York. Well the Navy has a buying department and they were in Washington, just like the Army and all. So I was the only one, out of that class of six hundred that went there, with the group. So I was very lucky, I had a good job. Because a lot of the girls went into dispersing, that's pay accounts and they got to get the pay accounts to get the fellas out. So, anyhow, that's what I did then.

Sinco: Uh huh. Did you request to be stateside?

Houghton: No, they weren't shipping the girls overseas then.

Sinco: Oh okay.

Houghton: It was only about a year or a year and a half later that they had permission to go nearly to Hawaii.

Sinco: In your training, were they bookkeeping classes? I'm interested in hearing about the training...

Houghton: Well, in Washington I kept the reports of all the girls going into the Navy. There were 1,680 girls going in every two weeks. By then they were going to Hunter College for boot training and specialist training. Later, they start out with boot training to teach them something about the Navy and then they go into their specialist training. So then I, let me see, what else. In the meantime, when I first arrived in Washington there were a very few WAVES, very few girls there, working for the NAVY. They knew that I had played ball, you knew I played ball. [laughs] So they asked me to I play for the girl's team, to start the softball team there cause there were a lot of girls who were away from home and never has been away from home before. Well, we didn't have enough girls to form a league there so I was playing baseball with the men's team. But that was baseball. So then I was playing baseball with the men's team in Washington. And then from there, when enough girls arrived, we formed the softball league. And that was all, that was not during the day, you know you're doing your work first. Also, the WAVES had to stand watches in the Navy Department and also in their living quarters – there wasn't too much time for softball.

Sinco: Right. That was a ...

Houghton: And if you can make a game, well that was gay too. But they had to do something. As I say, a lot of them had never been away from home before.

Sinco: Right and what... can you describe a typical day for you in your office?

Houghton: A busy day, I can tell you that. Because in this one section that I was in, we had Lieutenant Harding, who purchased all the blankets for the Navy so you can imagine his job. Another Lieutenant purchased all the shoes for the Navy. It was a very busy section. They were real nice people. I worked with fine people.

Sinco: And what did you do in all that?

Houghton: I kept the records for the WAVES and Navy Nurses.

Sinco: Okay. That's what you were in charge of... I see.

Houghton: Mmmmmhmmm. Eventually I became chief storekeeper.

Sinco: Okay. Wow. That's a big job, especially at that time.

Houghton: It was a big job.

Sinco: Yeah.

Houghton: I tell ya...

Sinco: Uh huh. What was your favorite part of the job? Did you have a favorite part?

Houghton: Well, no. You just did your job. I always liked working with books anyhow. I guess that's why I was selected, something like that. But no, as I say, there were mostly men that I worked with but there were women WAVES and civilians but... As I say we were busy. Just busy.

Sinco: How did you find men relating to women in your workplace?

Houghton: Oh, we were just another body. No, they were very nice, they were fine. They treated us nicely.

Sinco: Where did you live during this time, did you live in barracks?

Houghton: Well, in Washington I was in the first group, I'm trying to think we had six in a room. They had just opened this apartment, it was like an apartment house and

we had bunk beds. Then as more WAVES came into Washington the Navy bought more property and then we could, if you were first class or above you could move out, and live, what we called "live ashore"

When I became first class then I could move out. So I moved in with a lady, Grace Thorpe, who had her home over in Arlington Virginia. And she also worked for the Navy, then...

Sinco: So you lived there...

Houghton: I lived there for a while. Then the next thing I knew the whole unit, our unit was being transferred to New York. When I first got up to New York I lived in quarters until I could find a place to live. There again there was a lady who had an apartment. You see they were offering these things... not for free... but you know.

Sinco: Right. But they were available.

Houghton: And she happened to be... she worked for Bergdoff Goodman, I don't know if you're familiar with that, a big department store?

Sinco: Yes.

Houghton: So she had a room available and so I don't know, somebody told me about the room or what, but I went over to see her. And of course they ask you a lot of questions, and there are a lot of rules so I lived with her for awhile until the end of the war, her name was Edna Myers.

Sinco: And when you were transferred from Washington did you go to New York City, is that where you were located?

Houghton: Uh huh. Yeah.

Sinco: Okay. And how long were you in Washington, would you say?

Houghton: About one and a half years. I was transferred to New York.

Sinco: Oh okay. So when did you transfer to New York?

Houghton: December, 1944. I was there about a year, yeah, about 1944.

Sinco: Oh okay, I see and then did you go back to Washington? Or...

Houghton: No, well then I got out of the Navy in 1945, see? We got out on the point system. It's according to when you came into the military you get so many points all this and that. In other words people who had been in the service longer got out first, which is right. So then I got out and then I received a letter later on and it stated that they could use me. [laughs]

Sinco: Back in the Navy?

Houghton: Yes. So anyhow, what happened was they needed the older ones and I was one of the older ones. They needed a chief master of arms, in other words, in the quarters where the girls live you know, when the WAVES come in they live in quarters. They usually have an older girl who handles all of that and she would be called the Chief Master of Arms. So that's what they needed. They didn't need storekeepers right then, they needed that so next thing I know that's what I was doing.

Sinco: Oh, and that's after the war?

Houghton: Yeah. I was the chief master of arms.

Sinco: Okay, well. Where were you located then?

Houghton: Let me see, oh I think I came down to Jacksonville.

Sinco: Okay, that's right. Okay.

Houghton: Yeah. Yeah I think that's where I was.

Sinco: Okay, so how long, do you remember how long the commitment was when you went back in? Did you enlist for a few years?

Houghton: Well, what it was... no, I can't think of that.

Sinco: Okay.

Houghton: Anyhow I am in Jacksonville and next thing I know I'm transferred to Philadelphia. I was working with the Commissary store in the Navy Yard of Philadelphia, you know, the Commissary.

Sinco: Mmhmm. Yes.

Houghton: Okay. Well, I first went in to G.S.S.O. That's General Store Supply Office and their keeping records and so on, of everything. And let me see, where else I went. Then from there they shipped me to the Naval hospital in St. Albans, New York. And I was chief master of arms. [laughs]

Sinco: You must have been good at it!

Houghton: [laughs] I'll tell you one thing though, I'm sorry I didn't save it. You know we had all types of girls; black, yellow any kind. And it didn't mean anything to me. I had one girl, of course if you're running that place, you kept girls who are responsible to you for clean up and so on like every Friday they had certain duties to do. So I had a letter from a girl, a colored girl, and I didn't know her at all. And it was the nicest letter I

ever received and that she couldn't believe that I was a reserve. You know that I wasn't regular Navy, I was Reserve. And I don't know why I didn't keep it, but I didn't. It was a nice compliment for a reservist. [Revision: I'll tell you one thing though, I'm sorry I didn't save the letter I received from one of the WAVES. She was working for the Navy at 90 Church Street in New York and lived in the Navy Quarters in St. Albans, New York. I didn't know her but in her letter she said she couldn't believe I was a Navy Reservist and not regular Navy. I was glad she and the others approved of me as a reservists as it was a nice compliment for a Reservist.]

Sinco: Yeah, yeah that...

Houghton: Anyhow I didn't know the girl, she lived in the St. Albans quarters...

Sinco: She wasn't in your quarters?

Houghton: She was living there and worked in New York City at Ninety Church Street.

Sinco: Oh okay.

Houghton: Yeah.

Sinco: I'm interested too in how the city was changing during wartime. Cause you were there before we were in war, that weekend you went to visit your nurse friend and then coming back when you were in the Navy how had it changed?

Houghton: I didn't notice much of a change, but there was a change. Yeah yeah. There was a change. There were many more people in the city – it was always crowded.

Sinco: Were you able to go off base very often? Did you have a lot of free time?

Houghton: Not too often. Well, if I did I didn't take advantage of it. [laughs]

Sinco: [laughs] Maybe you were sleeping.

Houghton: Maybe that was it.

Sinco: Yeah. Okay. How long were you in the Navy?

Houghton: Well, let me see now. I was at the Naval Hospital St. Albans, that's right outside of New York City and then I was discharged again and then I reenlisted in a reserve unit, at that Willow Grove outside in Pennsylvania. That's south side of Philadelphia. A naval air station. I was in recruiting there. I guess they needed some help or something. Then I decided to come to Florida, so I transferred down here and I was with a reserve unit down here at Bradenton. But we trained at Sarasota and then I retired February 10th 1972. With all my active and inactive duty I have a total of twenty-eight and a half years.

Sinco: Okay. Wow. Were you able to stay in contact with your family? I know you were in the States..

Houghton: Oh yeah.

Sinco: Were you able to visit them and see them pretty often?

Houghton: Not often, but I see them. As I say I come from a large family in the... and sometimes they don't know where I am.

Sinco: Did you date while you are in the Navy?

Houghton: Sometimes, one boy from Texas... But this one incident, I was getting a "hop" I guess it was from Jacksonville to Washington and with quite a few of the fellas

there, the Navy and they were all getting on the plane. You could do that if there was space available – you know, they'd give you a hop. So that's what I did, so I got off the plane. No, it was Patuxent, in Maryland was where I got off and we had to go from there to Washington to get the train. So there were quite a few of us, and I think I was the only woman, WAVE. And we got in this cab or something there, in Maryland. And well lack of space I had to sit on one of the guy's lap [laughs] The sailor so he made the remark that it was the first time he ever had a chief sitting on his lap. [laughs]

Sinco: [laughs] Oh my goodness.

Houghton: I mean it was just a fun thing, that was all. He might have been a seaman, I don't know. [laughs]

Sinco: What...

Houghton: You know this is the first time that anyone has ever asked me about the Navy that's why it's really unusual.

Sinco: Oh really?

Houghton: Yeah. It's always about baseball and all that I had done and all that sort of thing. And you know it's not easy to remember things at my age.

Sinco: Oh no, you're doing wonderful.

Houghton: Oh yeah.

Sinco: This has been very interesting already.

Houghton: Oh yeah.

Sinco: Cause I'm just interested in the things you do remember. I'm wondering too about when you were in Washington during the war, how were supplies for where you were living, when you were living on site and then offsite. Did you have to deal with rationing?

Houghton: No, no. No but in Washington I wasn't in quarters, the one place in Eighteenth and G Street, I don't know if you are familiar with Washington, that had been a, it might have been a condominium at one time so when the war broke out the Navy took over. That's what they did with a lot of these places. And that's why I said there were six of us in this one large room, they had to put us some place... I'm trying to think, well, first of all when I left Indiana I had the measles. [laughs]

Sinco: Woah.

Houghton: [laughs] Well, when it started out and some of the girls had the measles and I didn't know I had it. But then when I came on to Washington I knew I had it so then they shipped me off to Bethesda Naval Hospital.

Sinco: Okay, and you were able to recuperate there.

Houghton: I also had appendicitis while I was in the Navy.

Sinco: Oh my goodness.

Houghton: I also had a broken ankle when I was in the Navy.

Sinco: Oh how did that happen?

Houghton: Playing ball.

Sinco: Yeah? And you were able to keep the softball team going?

Houghton: Yeah. Yeah

Sinco: You said as more girls came.

Houghton: Yeah. Yeah. Mmmhmmm.

Sinco: Okay. That's really great. Well, what else? Is there anything that you can remember that I haven't asked about or?

Houghton: No. I had been playing softball in Madison Square Garden, before the Navy.

Sinco: Mmmmm. And what was that like?

Houghton: Well, have you ever been in Madison Square Garden?

Sinco: Once.

[Not Related to WWII]

Sinco: Once the war was over, you continued in with the Navy... how did life change for you once the war was over but you were still in the Navy? Did it change?

Houghton: Not really. Prior to the Navy, I worked for a Wholesale Hardware House in Philadelphia. I had about thirty-five girls under me there and it was stock control and all that. And we didn't have those computers either. And that's when I signed up with the Navy from there. So when I came back I went back there to work. Then the President, Mr. Steltz asked me if I would like a job as a Buyer. I said sure, I wouldn't mind. And so that's what I was doing then.

Sinco: I'm a little... that was when you were in the Navy Reserves or that's when you were retired in the 1970s?

Houghton: No, that's when I got out of the Navy in '45. See. I went to my old job, and went back and had about thirty-five girls under me there. And that was complete stock control. And it was the oldest, I'll call it "Wholesale Hardware" but they covered everything. And they had been in business for over a hundred years in Philadelphia.

Sinco: Wow.

Houghton: So anyhow, that's how I said oh I'll go back there and see what happens.

[not related to WWII]

Sinco: Okay, just to back up a little bit, where were you when you learned about the end of the war?

Houghton: In '45? Where was I? I was in New York, is that what you mean?

Sinco: Yes, I was just wondering what that day was like. Or was it...

Houghton: Well, it was a crazy day. You know, around Times Square and all. Oh boy. The lady I lived with, Mrs. Edna Myers, had an apartment and I had a room there. And she was working at Bergdoff Goodman and when, of course, she heard the war was over she came out. I don't know if I met her there at Times Square or not, but there were a thousands and thousands there to celebrate.

Sinco: Wow. Just celebrating?

Houghton: Yeah celebrating, you betcha.

Sinco: That's great.

Houghton: Yeah. It was a different war... we knew who we were fighting.

Sinco: Did you keep in touch with any of the women you worked with during the war?

Houghton: Uh no, they're all gone now. I'm ninety-two, I'll be ninety-three in February if I make it.

Sinco: Wow. [laughs] What is the best thing you learned about yourself...

Houghton: Best thing I learned about myself?

Sinco: During this time... during wartime, during this time. While you were in the Navy. If you said no, not really, that's okay too.

Houghton: I don't know. I can't think I just thank all for the opportunities that I had.

Sinco: Okay, that's cool.

Houghton: But... I just fell in the right places in the right time.

Sinco: Well, I'm going to turn the tape off. And I want to thank you....

Houghton: I don't know, that tape, [laughs]

Sinco: Oh no! Hold on one moment.

[end of interview]



DIRK SHADD / For The Inquirer
Houghton, 89 and living in Sarasota, Fla., displays a photo self at age 12 in a Philadelphia Bobbies baseball uniform.

+

For a young girl, the trip of her life

In 1925, Edith Houghton journeyed to Japan to play baseball against men.

By Frank Fitzpatrick
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

COOPERSTOWN, N.Y. — On the night of Oct. 7, 1925, on the first-class deck of the President Jefferson, an ocean liner bound for Japan, a pale and seasick Edith Houghton hung over the railing and wondered how in the world she had ended up there.

Three years earlier, she had been a 10-year-old North Philadelphia tomboy who never expected to visit any place more exotic than Fishtown. She had spent her days playing baseball in the neighborhood park near 25th and Diamond Streets. Friends called her "The Kid" because of her precocious hitting and fielding skills.

One day in 1922, she had read in a newspaper that the Philadelphia Bobbies, a new professional women's baseball team, would be holding tryouts. She had walked to Fairmount Park and made the team as a short-

stop.

After that, she and the barnstorming Bobbies — named for the popular "bob" hairstyle of the 1920s — had held their own and made a few dollars playing men's teams across America.

Now here she was, sailing halfway around the world for a series of games against Japanese men. Even if she was vomiting constantly, it was pretty heady stuff for a girl who wasn't yet 14.

"For young women in 1925, to be playing baseball and to be going to Japan — well, that was pretty exciting," said Houghton, now 89 and living in Sarasota, Fla.

There would be more excitement ahead. Houghton would play for a number of other women's pro teams, and in 1946, she would become the first female scout in baseball history when Phillies owner Bob Carpenter hired her.

See **BOBBIES** on D7

Houghton
04.02.92

MM/P16-1(3)(SCJ)

16 March 1944

From: The Chief of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts.
To: The Chief of the Bureau of Naval Personnel.
Via: The Commanding Officer, Naval Barracks, Washington, D. C.
SUBJECT: Houghton, Edith G., Storekeeper, First Class, USNR, 720-29-14, Advancement of Rating to Chief Storekeeper, (Acting Appointment), in the Case of.
References: (a) BuPers Circular letter 110-43-R 1185.
(b) BuPers Circular letter 110-43 Par. 10.
(c) BuPers Circular letter 218-43.

1. Subject woman has been, and is at present, performing duties equivalent to a Chief Storekeeper. She is charged with the responsibility for all statistical records for the Naval Officers, Women's Naval Reserve and Navy Nurse Corps Uniform Section. These records include weekly, semi-monthly and monthly sales reports, stock records of the retail distributors, maintenance of procurement and production records, and all miscellaneous statistical work of the section. Approximately 200 retail stores are involved for the men's program, 100 for the Women's Naval Reserve and 40 for the Navy Nurse Corps plan. She is responsible for the performance of the duties of the other enlisted personnel in the section.

2. Storekeeper Houghton is thoroughly capable, mentally alert, cooperative and exceptionally industrious. At present she is studying 3 U. S. Armed Force Institute Courses, Bookkeeping and Accounting, Cost Accounting, and Advanced Accounting. She has given freely of her off-duty time to the advancement of the Athletic Program for members of the Women's Naval Reserve in the bureau. She perseveres well, despite complicated problems, and exercises splendid judgment when unusual situations are encountered. She has no apparent weaknesses, mental, moral, or physical, which might adversely affect her efficiency. She is considered outstanding for the type of service performed.

3. In view of the above, it is strongly recommended that the service time be waived and that Storekeeper Houghton be advanced to Chief Storekeeper, W-V-USNR.

W. B. YOUNG.

The 700 Level

Praise for story about a dream fulfilled

7-8-01 *Sheldon Inquirer*

Houghton
04.0292

Kudos to Frank Fitzpatrick for an interesting and off-beat article about a young girl who got the chance of a lifetime playing baseball in the 1920s ("For a young girl, the trip of her life", July 1).

Edith Houghton followed her dream by walking from Fishtown to Fairmount Park and playing her way on to the Philadelphia Bobbies, a women's professional team. Her ability, developed by playing ball in her neighborhood with the boys, won her the chance to travel, compete against men's teams around the country and eventually tour Japan while playing Japanese men's teams.

What a career!

I had never even heard of Edith Houghton. But after the writer told her story so well, I'm glad I have now.

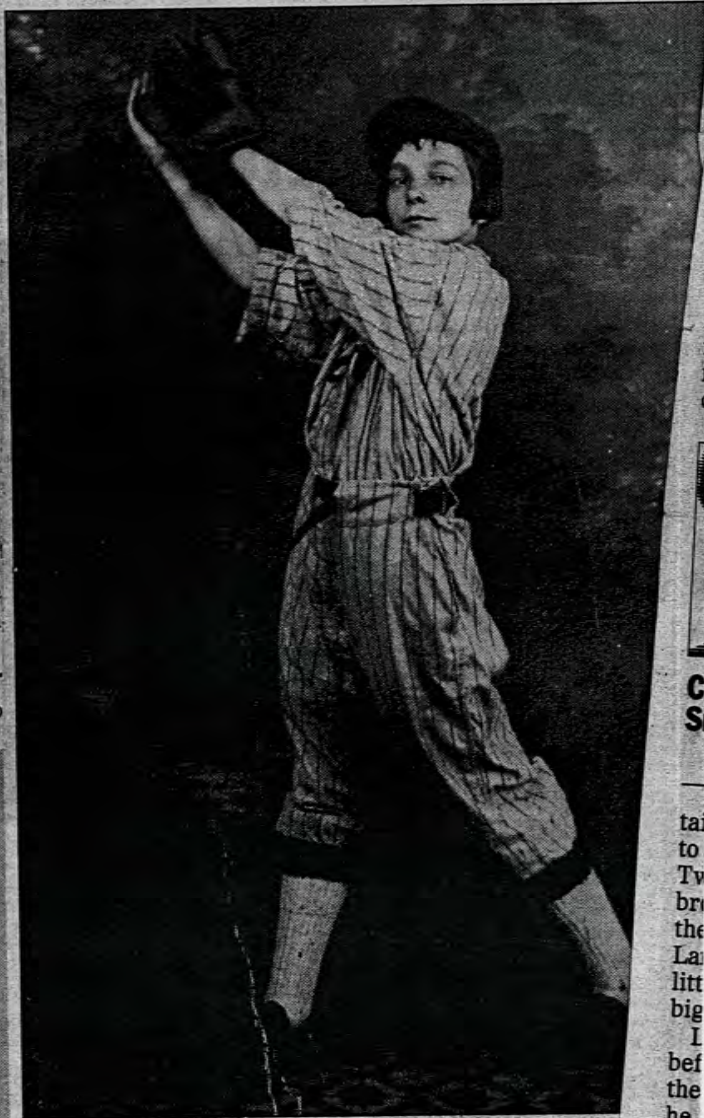
Somehow, the teams and leagues for which Ms. Houghton played didn't seem most important.

What struck me was how fondly she seems to remember those days without pride or arrogance. It's the memories of the fun of playing the game with true friends that are foremost in her recollections.

Thanks for such a unique example of how a person with ability can pursue and achieve their dream in sports, even when he or she has additional hurdles to clear in the process. People like Edith Houghton remind us not just of the goals we can reach but of the rich experiences we gain in pursuit of those goals.

Larry Blankemeyer

Richboro



Edith Houghton, at age 12 in 1924, was a Bobbies baseb

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For a young Philadelphia girl, it was the journey of a lifetime

Houghton
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BOBBIES from D1
Bob Carpenter hired her.

But that journey to Japan, arranged by a Philadelphia promoter named Paul Barth, remains special — even if most of the details have been forgotten in the intervening 76 years. Houghton believes she is the last survivor of the Bobbies, so there are no teammates to call on for help.

"I wish I could remember more about it," Houghton said, "but I was so young then."

But deep in the archives of the library of the National Baseball Hall of Fame, there is a document that would refresh her memory. A journal of the Bobbies' trip, kept by one of Houghton's teammates, a Philadelphia orphan named Nettie Gans — later Nettie Spangler — lay buried beneath hundreds of old newspaper clippings. Houghton said the writer contacted her about 15 years ago and mentioned that she would be sending the journal to Cooperstown.

"I know Nettie said she was trying to get the girls together, but it was difficult because some had died and so many of them had married and changed their names," Houghton said.

Gans' recollections deal little with the baseball the Bobbies played in Japan. (Using two male Philadelphians to pitch and catch, they won 60 percent of their games against Japanese men.) But they do provide a richly detailed glimpse of urban Japan in 1925 as well as the kind of life led by a barnstorming women's baseball team.

Women's professional baseball dated to at least 1867, and there were dozens of barnstorming female clubs before the Bobbies. But few undertook an adventure so exotic as a trip to Japan.

The Bobbies existed for little more than a decade. And while none of the players — all but two of whom were from Philadelphia — got rich, few other Americans in 1925 got the opportunity to experience what they did that autumn.

From the time they left Broad Street Station at 11:25 a.m. on Sept. 23 until they returned to crowds and photographers on Dec. 6, the Bobbies saw unimaginable sights, viewed dozens of silent movies, endured terrible seasickness, survived an earthquake in Osaka, shopped in Tokyo department stores, got into some shipboard trouble, met actors, journalists and even an English earl, taught their Japanese competitors to dance the Charleston and, of course, played lots of baseball.

"We played the Seattle Team today," wrote Gans, a leftfielder, of the final game before the Bobbies' departure on the ocean liner from that city in Washington state on Oct. 6. "I was spiked, kicked in the mouth, and [got] two bruised fingers."

Gans, who was raised in Philadelphia's Odd Fellows Orphanage and later lived in Orefield, Pa., apparently was one of the

Phillies to Get Woman's Angle in Hunt for Talent

Club Signs Edith Houghton, Ex-Wave to Scout Phila. District: Was Softball Ace



In 1946, The Inquirer reported the hiring of Edith Houghton by Phillies owner Bob Carpenter as baseball's first female scout.

younger women on the Bobbies. In all, 14 of them, ages 13 through 23, made the trip along with various chaperones, the promoter and their male pitcher and catcher — Earl Hamilton and Eddie Ainsmith.

"All of the girls were older than I was," Houghton said. "So when they wanted to smoke and drink, they didn't do it in front of me."

En route to their port of departure, the Bobbies stopped in places like Fargo, N.D., and Great Falls, Mont., for games.

"If 'Beauty is a joy forever' than the scenery here is such," Gans wrote of the Rockies surrounding Whitefish, Mont. "In the evening we went to a Barn Dance. They danced very odd."

On the 13-day voyage to Japan, Houghton, Gans and many of their teammates were consumed by seasickness.

"Still sick," wrote Gans, two days out of Seattle. "Tried to get up tonight to see the movies. The picture was about a man on a ship who was getting dizzy and consequently Edith Houghton, Slim and I made a wild dash to the deck."

They dragged themselves through the rest of the cruise and arrived in Yokohama on Oct. 19. They were greeted by Japanese women in wooden shoes and kimonos. ("Combs galore in women's hair.") They rode in rickshaws to their hotel and, the next day, lunched with Viscount Soto, described by Gans as fourth in line to the emperor.

The Bobbies lost their first game in Japan, 6-0, but Gans was more concerned with that night's party, hosted by an American newspaperman she referred to as "Mr. Russell." Throughout the 12-page journal, the young woman focused on the dances, parties and outings. Baseball games often were noted simply with "Played ball."

Playing baseball set the Bob-

bies apart in America. They were not the 1920s housewife set, so the male-dominated Japanese culture upset them. They were particularly bothered when they learned that two little girls who had performed for them had been sold by their father to raise money for his son's education.

"Men always come first in Japan," Gans wrote. "How silly!"

In Osaka, the team experienced a minor earthquake and encountered a Japanese man who had attended the University of Pennsylvania. Gans identified him as Moto Haishi, and he took the Bobbies to a Douglas Fairbanks movie, *Don Q*, during which a Japanese man stood on-stage and translated for the local audience.

The last recorded game of the trip took place on Nov. 16 in Kobe. Five days later, on Nov. 21, the Bobbies set sail for Vancouver, British Columbia. This time, the seas were smoother.

"No one has been seasick so far, except Fereba [Garnett Pat-tison, the third baseman]," Gans wrote.

After a raucous Thanksgiving celebration on Nov. 26, the Bobbies got into a little mischief. Passengers typically left their shoes outside their cabins at night to be polished. That night, the Bobbies rearranged them all.

"YES WE DID!!!" Gans proclaimed in her journal. "We changed them all around. We can't always be little angels."

The next night, there was an on-board masquerade party. The Bobbies resisted the urge to wear their baseball uniforms, baggier versions of male outfits. Houghton dressed as a ship's officer and Gans "like one of the NY Doods!"

From Vancouver, the Bobbies took a train through the Canadian Rockies, stopping in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. As they neared the United States, customs inspectors boarded the train, looking, in that era of Prohibition, for contraband liquor.

"I don't know if they ever found any or not," Houghton said.

Finally, on the afternoon of Dec. 6, the Bobbies arrived in Philadelphia. Crowds of relatives, friends and curious on-lookers met them there, as did several newspaper photographers.

"PHILADELPHIA AT LAST!" Gans exclaimed. "I don't know how we stood still [for the pictures], we were so excited."

Then, with hugs and tears, the women said goodbye to one another. Gans returned home to the orphanage, where she was met with numerous questions.

"It was difficult to answer all the questions while eating, but I survived," she wrote. "All told, I finished my dinner and thanked the good Lord for bringing us home safe and for the great time I had playing ball with the PHILADELPHIA BOBBIES in Japan."

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