



# HOME FRONT



## GETTING THE PLANS ON PAPER



It's a long way from Woonsocket, South Dakota, to London, but former WAC Helen Denton let her fingers do the walking.

A highly skilled graduate of Mankato Business College, the 22-year-old secretary was charged with typing the battle plans for D-Day.

"It was very hectic and very scary in London during that time," said Denton from her Riverdale, Georgia, home. "We had to spend our evenings three stories underground because it wasn't safe in our hotel. It wasn't very comfortable for us."

Working with a team of officers – two British, one Australian, one American and one Canadian – Denton took dictation for about six weeks while typing the invasion plans. At the end of each day, every page would be stamped "Top Secret," and a guard would come to the room and burn the carbon paper and typing ribbon before Denton was excused.

"I was more concerned about making perfect letters than the content of what I was typing," reminisced Denton.

After the battle plan was complete, she took her work to General Eisenhower, a man she recalls as "very gentle and very military."

"You have a brother here," Ike said

matter-of-factly to Denton. "Yes, but I don't know where he is," young Helen said. She hadn't had contact with her brother in two years.

Ike assured Helen that her brother, who was under the command of General Patton, would not be part of the initial D-Day invasion force; he then surprised her with a two-day pass to visit him. She said the visit with her brother – who, after the war, returned to the family farm in Woonsocket – was "great."

While Denton had worked extensively on the plans for D-Day, she had no idea of the date of the invasion. Where was she on the day that would live on in history?

"I pulled KP," she says with a chuckle. But in a more serious tone, she remembered the steady drone as wave after wave of air support passed overhead.

D-Day was hardly the end of Denton's adventures in Europe. She went to Normandy after the invasion and flew to Paris when the Allies gained control. After the war, Denton went to work for Delta Airlines, the company from which she retired.

Today, she remains active talking to schools and assemblies about her experiences. She is one of the few women commanders of a VFW post (Post Number 3650) in Georgia. She is pleased with the idea of a National D-Day Memorial and Education Center.

"I look through the text books of the children, and all they have to say about D-Day are the dry facts. But then I tell them I was there. I show them my uniform. I tell them about my experiences and they really respond. It gives children a sense of history and that's something we really need today."

