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Period:3

Lee Cohenour  
Air Force  
March 1949-December 1954

### Lee Cohenour

Ms. Helen Cohenour, or as she likes to be called, Ms. Lee Cohenour, served in the United States Air Force in the years of early 1949 to December 1954. She comes from a Polish family with five brothers and three sisters. As a child, they lived in a community with other Polish families. She said they lived in an over crowded house. During the time of the Depression, everyone was trying to find jobs but she loved traveling around and she didn't want to spend all her time at home so she knew joining the United States Air Force was what she wanted to do.

In early 1949, Ms. Lee left from Ohio to go to basic training and she had also applied to Ohio State University before she left. A couple weeks after leaving home, she was accepted into the school, but wasn't able to attend as she was already in the Air Force. She was the only woman leaving on the train from her area. When she got to basic training, it was all women. One of her memories from basic training that she quoted was, "It's scary, but you do what you were told." It was a lot harder for men as they were actually going into combat. She only got to shoot a gun one time while in the Air Force. The military had a form of punishment called "gigs" and the women would receive a gig if something had ever gone wrong in the stations they were assigned to each day. One time, someone put gum underneath the ironing board and she was blamed for it. Since she had to agree with the punishment, Ms. Lee missed out on an evening dance. She then spent her time cleaning and scrubbing eighteen shower curtains with just a brush. When she was

in basic training she met this woman named Milman who couldn't handle the basic training and was out of it before it was even over. While in the service, she met her wonderful husband. On their first date, he asked her to marry him. It was surprising at first, but he knew what he wanted since he was paying attention to her for a while. About six months later, they got married in the base chapel in 1952. He was in the minor leagues as a pitcher before he joined the Air Force. As they would play catch together, she bragged about always being able to catch his fastball. His knuckleball and curveball were a different story. They were always happy together, you could see how they really loved each other. Throughout her life, photographers would take pictures of all the great times she had with her family and friends to show others how happy they were, but the little things in life made her happy so she never had to pretend.

In the Air Force, women were always being tested. The male officers would quiz them on what they actually did know. She wanted to prove herself worthy of having the same amount of knowledge as the men. Ms. Cohenour, was always prepared for these quizzes. She would study and get ready for them as she wanted to show the guys how smart she was. One day, a male officer was telling inappropriate jokes. Since he was a man, he thought he could get away with his dirty stories. What he didn't know was she had, had enough of it. She left the room slamming the door which then broke the glass. "You never slam the door on an officer," she says. She was a little rebellious in some ways, like slamming the door for example or wearing her hair down. They were required to wear their hair up, but every chance she got, it was long and down. The service was fun and there were lots of things for the woman to do. Many of them played sports. She played softball, basketball, and enjoyed bowling with some of her friends. She was a part of

a softball team called the Bomberettes and she claims she couldn't hit the ball, the only thing she could do was bunt, and play defense.

Ms. Cohenour wanted to be in the Air Force and fly in planes. She went on many C47s, gooneybirds, for a total of one hundred and thirty four hours. They were the basic models of planes at the time. She had served in the Korean War as the woman in the control tower where the planes would be preparing to land. One day while working, she was on the mic. talking to pilots, helping direct them. Ms. Lee saw something that didn't look safe. She kept telling the Jet pilot, but everything looked fine to him. His wheels weren't down and loaded. He also didn't want to listen to a woman telling him how to run things. He knew better and nothing was wrong. At the last minute, he finally decided to pull up and go around after she had been telling him over and over. This move saved about twenty five lives and their families. She was very heroic and her decision to go into the service was truly what she wanted to do. Another instance, Ms. Lee and her husband were at Huntington beach. Lee and her husband would go past the boundaries that were supervised by lifeguards. Her husband, a great swimmer, was sleeping and she went out to the water. One woman was far out in the water, struggling to swim. She was yelling for help and at the time, Lee was the only one close enough to help her. She debated going out there as it could risk both of their lives. In the end, she decided to go out there and help this woman. Ms. Cohenour said, "This was the greatest thing I could have ever done." Later on, her husband would tell everyone about her heroic stories and brag to everyone about how his wife was saving many lives.

After being in the service, she continues to live with one of her daughters. She has five daughters and Mr, Cohenour passed away in 1998, She loves to bowl and go to bingo with some

of the other veterans and elders. At the age of eighty five, she is still walking her dog daily. To this day, she strongly believes that everyone is put onto this Earth for a reason. King High Remembers was an absolute amazing experience and the woman we had would explain the most amazing stories that she had from her time in the service. She was truly an inspiring person.