



Louise Outlaw Shallit

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Louise O. Shallit, 90, longtime reporter, writer

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Inquirer Staff Writer

Five days into World War II boot camp for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Louise Outlaw wrote a story for the Philadelphia Record from Fort Oglethorpe, Ga.

She had seen her fellow raw recruits, she wrote, "take a train from Philadelphia and arrive at this fort in the cold dark of 5 a.m. two days later - not a disgruntled or complaining WAAC among them."

"The girls in this Philadelphia company (the only ones I know well) can take more than your most hardened district [crime] reporter and come up smiling," she wrote.

It was typical that, even in her first days at boot camp, she found a story.

Yesterday, Louise Outlaw Shallit, 90, died at White Horse Village, a retirement community in Newtown Square.

She was a newspaper reporter, an author of magazine stories and romance novels, and an outspoken liberal supporter of the Vietnam War.

Her first short story was published in 1947 in Collier's magazine, her son Jeffrey said, and her last in Good Housekeeping in 1993.

The writing bug had bitten far earlier.

"She edited a newspaper at her home," her son said, "starting like when she was 12. She created it herself."

Born in New York City, she graduated in 1937 from the former Bay Ridge High School in Brooklyn.

In 1938, her son said, she became the first female reporter for the Florence (S.C.) Evening Star.

In December 1939, he said, she became a reporter for the Record and, after her Army duty, worked there until it went out of business in 1947 after a long strike.

She and her husband, Joseph, had been Record reporters and, without a newspaper, both became freelance writers.

Her stories, fiction and nonfiction, were published in Collier's, Cosmopolitan, Good Housekeeping, and Reader's Digest.

The annual collection The Best American Short Stories for 1948, her son said, featured fiction by giants such as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner.

But, he said, "at the end, it lists other short American fiction, and she's listed."

In the 1960s, she wrote Sunday magazine features for the Evening Bulletin.

In the 1980s, she took another career turn.

"She had written many novels, but all her novels were turned down. . . . So she turned to romance novels . . . out of a desire to get published. And to make money." And, her son said, publishers such as Harlequin obliged.

Both Shallits were vocal supporters of the war in Vietnam.

In 1965, an Inquirer story focused on the couple at a Washington demonstration, where she wore a sign stating, "I'm a Mother, I'm a Liberal and I'm Against Red Aggression."

In March 1969, the couple called on Episcopalians to cut off funding the work of the Rev. David Gracie, a Philadelphia antiwar activist.

In an interview, Mrs. Shallit, vice president of the Committee for Preservation of Episcopal Principles, stated that "by holding back our money, we may save our church."

But later that month, Episcopal Bishop Robert L. DeWitt announced he was backing an antidraft rally, and Gracie.

Besides her son Jeffrey, Mrs. Shallit is survived by another son, Jonathan, and four grandchildren. Her husband died in 1995.

A graveside service was set for 2 p.m. tomorrow at St. Paul's Cemetery, 415 E. Athens Ave., Ardmore.