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*The* **GIRL**  
**WHO WORE O. D.**

By Alexander Gardiner



Now—and then. Mrs. Robert Walbridge, President of The American Legion Auxiliary. At the right, Mrs. Walbridge (then Irene McIntyre) and her sister serving coffee and doughnuts at Ansaucville, France, in 1928 a few days before they and other Salvation Army workers were under German fire. Left to right, the girls are Gladys McIntyre, Irene McIntyre, and Stella Young



**O**NE day in the early summer of 1917 Commissioner William McIntyre of the Salvation Army opened his morning mail to discover to his surprise that his two daughters, Irene and Gladys, though something like four hundred miles apart, had taken the same occasion to ask him a single question. "Can you get me into Salvation Army war work?" it ran in effect. Though there were probably hundreds of other words in each letter nobody now knows what they were.

The Commissioner, being an idealistically practical man—witness the fact that almost all his life has been spent in Salvation Army work—reasoned that the two young girls had been corresponding and had decided that the way to get what they wanted was to advance to the attack in force. But there were any number of factors to be considered. For one thing, there was their mother. And had they stopped to consider just what they were trying to do? So he wrote from his New York office to Gladys, enjoying a vacation at the shore, and to her older sister Irene, who was engaged in legal work for a Rochester, New York, publishing house, and sought enlightenment. The replies he received convinced him that while, curiously, neither had spoken or written to the other about war service both were terribly in earnest in their request. They were all for action.

It wasn't an easy request to grant. The United States had been in the war only a few months, and the Salvation Army in



But these were extraordinary times, and the Commissioner, weighing the matter, decided that if his daughters wanted to serve their country through his organization he would give them all the help he could. As one of the



*The Girl Who Wore O. D.*

*A Salvation Army Hut Near the Front Lines in France  
(image added)*

higher officers of the Salvation Army—he was in charge of the work in New England, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey—his help was a big factor. In August Irene gave up her job in Rochester and returned to the family home in Mount Vernon, New York, and with Gladys waited for the decision. It was November before they received their appointments, but before the first of the year they had sailed with fifteen other Salvation Army workers and were stationed in the Gondrecourt training area with the First Division. And when the Division went up into the so-called quiet Toul sector that

Hampshire were without Auxiliary units. The Auxiliary in the Department numbered 3500 members, a two-year increase of some 1500. In membership the New Hampshire Auxiliaries rank proportionately second in the country. Under difficult conditions Mrs. Walbridge traveled twenty thousand miles within her Department in two years, inspiring the members to greater achievements. Under her direction the finances of the Department were completely reorganized and a budget system was adopted, with the result that a balance has been created for strictly Department uses in excess of the former annual income. Permanent headquarters has been established, with a full-time secretary. And every activity outlined by the national organization is in actual operation in the Department.

On that record the Auxiliary at its Paris convention placed her at the head of the organization.

The news, sent to the United States by the various press associations and special correspondents, probably interested no group outside the Legion more than the New Hampshire alumnae of Mt. Holyoke College and members of the class of 1913 at Mt. Holyoke. Since becoming a resident of New Hampshire, Mrs. Walbridge's interests, outside of the Auxiliary, have been directed toward work in her college alumnae association. Among her classmates, who are of course scattered throughout the country, there was pride that one of their number had been chosen to the Auxiliary's highest office. And as one of them expressed it in a letter to me, "I believe all of her classmates would say of her office in the Legion Auxiliary: 'Wouldn't you know Irene would reach such a position?—and the Legion Auxiliary is indeed fortunate to have her for their president—success to her and the organization!'"

Another member of Mt. Holyoke, 1913, reveals that Irene was voted the "most artistic" of her class, and adds:

"Her skill in any kind of handwork (Continued on page 58) looked to us like genius. Penmanship, needlecraft, drawing, painting—she was master of them all—and very generous with them. Her art work in the class records lifted those amateur efforts to the professional class in appearance. Her ability to accomplish successfully these tasks—or any others—under pressure amazed us. . . . She could do in a short time, and win the coveted high marks, too, any amount of work which we had been laboring over interminably. Her mind was unusually keen and her judgments for the most part were more mature than ours. . . . She had dignity and poise above the average."

When the story of the McIntyre sisters' behavior under fire was cabled back to this country in the spring of 1918 newspaper editors realized the news value of the "Doughnut Sisters" as the two girls came to be called, and kept after their correspondents on the various



*The Girl Who Wore O. D.*

portions of the front visited by the girls to send more stories about them. As a consequence thousands of words were cabled to this country. The correspondents were of course not allowed to send back news of identifiable units in the Army, and only on rare occasions could they mention names. But here were two young American girls displaying in an advanced sector the sort of initiative and pluck that we like to consider typically American—and the censor could see no reason for deleting their names.

A correspondent for one of the largest of the press associations told me the other day that another reason why the McIntyres got into the news so frequently in those stirring days was that they were so unaffectedly on the job all the time.

“They didn’t try to impress on any of us the fact that they were doing a wonderful job,” he said. “In fact they didn’t talk about their work. And because of that spirit of self effacement they ‘sold’ us on the Salvation Army, besides winning from all of us—soldiers and correspondents—all sorts of admiration for them personally.”

The behavior of these girls under fire won for their organization the esteem and affection of the entire country. That esteem and affection were deserved. The Salvation Army did a grand job with limited facilities at its disposal.

Right here it might not be out of order to say that in addition to the service of the two McIntyre girls and their father, who also engaged in war work with the Salvation Army, the family had representatives in the Army and Navy. Clifford McIntyre, a student at Yale University, became commanding officer of navigation at Pelham Bay Park, New York, and later assistant recruiting inspector for the Naval Department of the East, with the grade of lieutenant. Richmond McIntyre, hardly seventeen years of age, accompanied his sisters to the pier when they sailed for the war zone and then got aboard a train for Fort Slocum, New York, where he convinced recruiting officers that he was old enough to join a medical detachment of the Army.

Mrs. Walbridge was born in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, where her father and mother were engaged in Salvation Army work. Her grandparents on both sides came from Inverness in the Highlands of Scotland. During her babyhood her father was carrying on welfare work in Labrador among the fishermen, on the Banks, where he came in contact with the early efforts of the later-to-become-famous missionary, Dr. Grenfell, and in Newfoundland. It was pioneer work and the efforts told on Mr. McIntyre’s health, so that it was necessary for him to go to a warmer climate. So the next few years found the McIntyres in California. Later the family moved to Buffalo and Irene was in elementary



*The Girl Who Wore O. D.*

school there for five years. But the memories of California must have been especially pleasant, for Commissioner McIntyre recalls that Irene and an older brother made a daring attempt to go back west.

"She was but a baby of two years when we took her to California," he says, "and she and this brother both seemed to have it tucked away in their minds to some day get back, so when he was about ten, and she about eight, he suggested the time was ripe for such a venture, and it appealed to her adventurous spirit. Two didn't seem a large enough crowd so they took a still younger brother, and their two collie dogs, while Mrs. McIntyre and I were absent from home for a few days.

"After they had been tucked away in bed by their grandmother, and thought to be all safe and sound, and she had gone to her room, they crept out, dressed, and slipped out a basement window so they wouldn't leave any unlocked doors behind them, and with their dogs and some blankets set out. But they didn't get far before they realized that blankets would not be the only thing they would need, at least I think the older brother thought of this. They would need money and food, neither of which they had provided themselves with. They walked back to a point from which they could see the windows of their home and discovered the house all lighted up, which meant their grandmother had discovered that they had gone. Their hearts smote them when they thought of the fright that would strike the grandmother, and after a conference under the friendly moon, they gathered up their blankets, called their little brother and their dogs to follow and headed homeward. This runaway was the only thing of its type that she ever attempted."

From Buffalo the family moved to Mt. Vernon, New York, and Irene was graduated from Mt. Vernon High School. Commissioner McIntyre is now stationed in Atlanta, where he directs Salvation Army work in fifteen southern States.

In the fall of 1909 Irene entered Mt. Holyoke College at South Hadley, Massachusetts, being graduated four years later.

In the summer of 1914 Commissioner McIntyre and his older daughter set out for Constance, Switzerland, where a great international peace conference was to be held. The two were in Strasbourg late in July when German mobilization began.

It was impossible for them to get into Switzerland, and for a time it looked as if they would be unable to get out of Germany. Mr. McIntyre's ingenuity overcame all difficulties, however, and they were able to get into Holland. They saw the opening of the first line of dykes, Holland's move to escape the fate of



*The Girl Who Wore O. D.*

Belgium in enforcing her neutrality.

The last boat out of Holland for Harwich, England, carried the McIntyres. By this time the North Sea had been planted with mines, and the boat, overloaded, came into the harbor at Harwich to the sounds of distant naval warfare. A number of German sailors taken in the first encounter with the British were brought into Harwich as their boat docked. Father and daughter saw British mobilization under way in England and Scotland before they sailed for home in September. She had seen Europe in peace during July, had caught a glimpse of the Kaiser's yacht at Berholm on the Sognefjord in Norway and had seen Stockholm brilliant with decorations receiving the French President and navy on official visit. And then she had gained a glimpse of the feverish excitement of nations girding themselves for a great war. Beneath the surface attitude of certain victory that was rife in Strasbourg she had noted the anxiety of the people, and had been struck with the bewilderment that had fallen upon the nations.

She was to see Strasbourg under still more martial conditions, for when the French entered it as victors she went along. And in 1927, as a member of the Commander's Party, she saw it with the war nine years behind.

The baptism of fire which the two McIntyre girls had at Ansauville was followed by strenuous service at Raulecourt, where they served with the 26th and 82d Divisions before the St. Mihiel drive. There they cooked out-of-doors in a position where they could be seen with the naked eye from the German observation posts on Mont Sec. So exposed was the position that the approach to it had to be made by night. It was while here that the two girls met the officers who later became their husbands, Gladys being married in 1919 to Lieutenant Russell Harmon of Company C, 104th Infantry, 26th Division.

After Raulecourt, the two girls went to Vacqueville in the Luneville Sector with the 77th Division. One night while here they started to take a walk for exercise after they had closed their hut, and in the confusion of the relieving of troops, took the wrong road and walked into a dangerous position on the front. They passed in front of machine gun emplacements and came near walking into the German lines. Finally they were stopped by a sentry who shouted "Halt." The word being the same in English and German, they did not know for a moment whether they were being stopped by an American or a German. They were taken to battalion headquarters because they were coming from the direction of the German lines.

At Vacqueville they joined the 37th Division, Ohio troops, and went with them to the Argonne, arriving there two days before the opening of the offensive, being among the first of the welfare workers in that sector.



### *The Girl Who Wore O. D.*

They were at Recicourt with the 37th Division when it took off in the Argonne offensive. The night before the offensive Irene stood on a hill and watched the tremendous artillery preparation. She has a very vivid impression of this night and remembers particularly seeing two airplanes shot down in flames during the early combats overhead. At Recicourt Gladys was stricken with appendicitis and taken back to the hospital, leaving Irene alone. She had lost all of her equipment in the move to the Argonne, but was provided with a field kitchen and some G. I. cans with which she made black coffee for the troops. In the second week of the Argonne offensive she was with the First Division.

After service at Neuilly during the relief of the 28th Division Irene McIntyre went to Varennes, where she had a tent over a shell hole at a cross road that was heavily shelled by the enemy. Here she dispensed doughnuts and coffee to men of the 28th and 42d Divisions. Later, at Cheppy, she was with the First and 42d and worked in a triage with the wounded. She got a touch of gas here while maintaining headquarters in a captured German trench the mouth of which was under fire of the retreating enemy. At Thiaucourt, the night before the signing of the Armistice, the building in which she was working was struck by a shell during a bombardment, but she was not injured. After the Armistice she spent the winter in the devastated villages which quartered American troops. In addition to her citations Mrs. Walbridge



*Irene McIntyre (now Mrs. Robert Walbridge) receiving the Twenty-Sixth Division's citation from Major General Clarence R. Edwards. Gladys McIntyre, her sister, stands next to her. The McIntyres were the only members of their sex cited by the New England Division*



### *The Girl Who Wore O. D.*

was recommended through regular Army channels for the Distinguished Service Cross, an honor that would have required a special Act of Congress.

When Mrs. Walbridge was elected National President at the Paris convention, she brought to the leadership of the Auxiliary the same resourcefulness and vision that had carried her through her war experiences.

The need of more comprehensive publicity which would better present the aims and activities of the Auxiliary to the public had long been felt in the organization. The convention in Paris gave authority for the establishment of a publicity directorship. By the time her administration was two months old, Mrs. Walbridge had this publicity work established and supplying the organization with its services.

A program for the furtherance of the Legion's work for the welfare of the children of dead and disabled veterans has been developed and regional chairmen of child welfare have been appointed, making the Auxiliary's set-up for this work conform with that of the Legion. Strong support has also been given to the Legion's legislative program; particular efforts have been exerted for the passage of the bill for the retirement of disabled emergency officers and the Universal Draft Act.

Mrs. Walbridge led the Auxiliary



*(image added)*

delegation to the Women's Patriotic Conference on National Defense, held in Washington, D. C., in February, at which strong support to national defense measures was pledged in behalf of the women of thirty-four patriotic organizations. She took a leading part in the conference, serving as vice chairman, and was elected chairman of the extension committee which will have charge of the conference next year.

The expressed aim of Mrs. Walbridge in her administration is full co-operation with the Legion in all its work, and, through increased membership, to make the Auxiliary a more effective aid in the Legion program.



*The Girl Who Wore O. D.*

Mrs. Walbridge has recently returned from a trip to Hawaii and expects to visit all the Departments during her term of office. She is the youngest President in the Auxiliary's history, but her record of service in war and peace justifies a belief that the Auxiliary is in for its greatest year in growth and service.



*(image added)*