As You Were

Where fond military memories fall in

Now, How to Duplicate It?

WHILE SERVING on the USS Romulus in the Pacific, during World War II, a shipmate and I decided to paint the scuffed deck of the four-bed sick bay, which was also our living quarters.

The only regulation color was battleship gray, so I checked out a gallon of paint and two brushes. We put a “Wet Paint” sign on our door and painted our way to our bunks.

The paint dried to a nice finish overnight, but the next evening, one of us dropped a glass gallon jar of some solution, and wherever it ran, it turned the battleship gray to a beautiful sky blue.

It was too late to paint, so we picked up all the glass and mopped the solution all over the deck to even out the color. We were delighted with the results.

Later, when the captain showed up for an inspection, we stood at attention and feared the reaction to our nonregulation color. The captain took one look at the sky-blue deck and told the executive officer to take a note: “I want this very same paint on my stateroom deck.” He turned to us and said, “Good job. Carry on, men.”

We wondered what the captain would think when he was told the Navy had no sky-blue paint, but we were never questioned about it.
—Warren Matheny, Glenville, West Virginia

Not Exactly Passing Muster

I WAS a new recruit, in 1944, at the Women’s Army Corps (Wac) Basic Training Center at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.

One Saturday morning, our commanding officer ordered a white-glove inspection of the barracks with all personnel in full dress uniform. As the inspection team approached, one of my barracks mates pointed to a coat hanger lying on my bed. I quickly grabbed it and shoved it under my uniform.

When the team stopped in front of me, I saluted, and the coat hanger fell out from under my jacket and landed right on the shoes of the commanding officer.

If that wasn't enough, she walked to the laundry bag hanging at the end of my bed and gave it a swift kick to see if it was empty, which it was supposed to be for inspection. Unfortunately, I had put my flatiron in the bag.

I got restricted to the barracks for a week, and the commanding officer got a sore toe.

—Margaret Noonan Jay, Schiller Park, Illinois