Military intelligence

BY FRANCES FLINT

To hear Yoshinda Alvare tell it, her four years in military intelligence were just a shop-
ing spree.

"I tell you about Berlin, I tell you about the people I worked with," she says, "I tell you I did shift work," said the 22-
year-old Alvare, who then proceeded to tell about the fantastic bargains she found in East Berlin stores but absolutely
nothing about the work which had kept her busy since she joined the Army in 1966.

 Alvare did confide that her
time in the Army came as an
after thought.

"When I graduated from Wapato High School in 1961, I
planned to go to college but the summer job I was plan-
ing on to pay my way fell through, so I went in Texas with my parents who visit
there every couple of years. I didn't know what I was going to do but a cousin was enlisting in the
Army. We got to talking and I said 'Sure, I'll enlist with you. It was finally decided my sister, three cousins and I would enlist. All
but one cousin opted out. That one dropped out during basic training, so eventually it was just me.'

She laughed at the memory.

Her own basic training at Fort Leonardwood in Mis-
souri went smoothly enough, she said. She then went to Monterey, California, where she spent a year at Defense
Language Institute learning Russian. As a former student of French and Spanish who also has a strong home back-
ground in Spanish, she seemed to do well with the new language which directly
influenced how she spent the next couple of years.

"This year you don't become fluent in Russian. It did give me the all-around basics and an idea of the lan-
guage. You know enough to place together what someone is saying," is the way Alvare explained.

Another 18 weeks of langu-
aging training in Texas completed the training Alvare needed before she left for Berlin two and a half years ago.

After the training she received is something she refuses to discuss. Discharged new
(then returned in Wapato January 14, she evaded
answer when asked if she spoke much Russian during these years in Germany and

she laughs when it is suggest-
et that maybe she only listened to Russian.

"You don't really get a Sovieta in West Berlin," she
said with a grin.

"But I did go into East
Berlin to shop. The exchange rate was about 13 East
German dollars to a dollar. Civilians were told they could
bring in only 30 East marks but that didn't apply to the
military. They didn't seem to pay any attention to how
much we brought in, and that caused some resentment. We'd come over with tons and tons of money like it was
go ing out of style."

"You could buy fantastic things. I mean really nice things, Feather drones, all
types of china, silverware, tea sets."

Alvare passed on to explain that a feather duster is a
cosmopolitan stuffied with layers of feathers.

"It's soft and soft and beautiful, I have two . . . and a tea set," she said.

Her grin made her look like a little girl again.

"On these trips beyond the Berlin Wall, Alvare—like others in Military Intelligence—had to remove the shoulder bars that identified her as MI personnel.

"There were a lot of regu-
lations about going into East Berlin. Remove our should-
er bars was one. But since MI every now and then who removed them. It seemed a little drastic but
that was whatever you guys want," she said, grinning again.

She said those trips beyond the Berlin Wall were strictly
shopping sprees.

"And, of course, the wall is still threatening. More so, because they are now putting solid wall behind the first one. There's barbwire and little things like that.

The part you see you don't want to go any further. There's graffiti on the wall. Some in Russian, some in English but 'all is well,'" she said.

Alvare said peace symbols have a prominent place amid the
graffiti and also contains the earthier variety which might be found on paint-smeared buildings here in the Valley.

"There's also some that looks just like all colors. Written on you can't read any one thing," Alvare said.

"You had to walk right
t here, an hour from where I lived. You could go on your bike an hour and run into the wall. The most they
bring is a brown to her

Trips on Berlin's efficient buses and U-Bahn (under-
ground) are way more comfortable than confronting the wall.

"A ride on any bus put you into a shopping center," she said. "Especially in seven
cities, six or seven down-
Ther are no different shopping centers. There are

Sgt. Alvare—today in Wapato

shop here, there, under-
ground, on top of each other. Unbelievable.

"What was really strange to me in that in front would be a shop and in back or overhead there would be a home. What was really amazing was walking in residential areas and seeing... a bar at the bottom of a house. You could walk along drop into a bar and have a drink and walk along in the next one."

While styles were changing at home, Alvare saw them begin...or follow...in Berlin.

"There were the Mohawks and painted hair. They splashed the colors on the
mousie. There was a place called The Jungle, for punk rockers. I went in there and I saw this girl with splashed hair painted red. She had a white mouse on her shoulder. It was moving around and I said to myself, 'Hey, wait a minute. What's this?' It was strange," said
Alvare.

"Some of these people hated us. They'd just as soon spit on you, but the older people were different. They could be just as nice and talk
to you, but you couldn't do anything about the ones who remained having on us there. That's just the way it is."

In spite of the fringe benefit
in week-long skiing trip to Austria. Alvare doesn't think she'll pick up her option to re-enlist during the next six

months.

"It's hard to say. I want to do something but I don't know what. When I graduated in 1970, I knew what I was going to do and now I still don't.

There was no grin on her face when she said that.

"The training I received in the Army won't help me a bit now. What can I use my Russian for? Anything I did in the job is not useful to us. But the Army or the National Security Agency. Maybe if I had taken that training—something like that—it would be different. I think I'd like to get into business manage-
ment, take some business courses.

"But everything now is pretty much wall, waiting for the
next quarter to start."

Home now, looking back on an experience few Wapato High School graduates will have, of aware of what the experience did and did not do for her, Alvare offered a piece of advice to this year's gradu-
ates. "If you're not sure what they want to do, eliminating wouldn't be a bad idea. You must a lot of people. I have a number of friends now, I can go to just about any state and it'd be 'Come on in, no problem; I know people everywhere."

"The military helps you grow up too. You have to make your own decisions, pay your own bills. No one else will do it for you."