My name is Laura Brooks and I was born and raised in Macomb, Ill. My father’s name is Ivan Brooks, Sr. It is his story working at Camp Ellis that I would like to share. You see, I have been researching for quite some time and have not been able to locate any information about my father nor any other Black people from the neighboring communities that worked at the Camp. I believe that their story is also important to the history of Camp Ellis. You see, my father and his friends served their country during World War II by working at one of the PXs at Camp Ellis (He said it was PX 14). Here is his story. (By the way, my father passed away a few years ago, but just prior to his death, I videotaped him while he was telling me his experience at Camp Ellis as best as he could remember):

Some of the Black women in Macomb, including my mother Bertha Brooks, Nadine Coleman, and others, did laundry for the service men. My father, his sister Ruth Sloan, and a friend Kathryn Leatherwood, were some of the clerks at PX 14. Esther Webster, a Black woman from Galesburg, who had just graduated from Knox College, was the manager. PX 14 was the PX where only Black clerks work. He said that the Black soldiers and white soldiers could go into any PX, but the clerks were segregated in the PXs. There was a PX where White clerks worked and a PX where black clerks worked.

For some reason Esther was fired one Friday and they were going to hire a White Manager that next Monday. But the Black clerks did not want to work for the White manager and was going to stay home that Monday. But Dad asked them to come to work on Monday and he would see what he could do to help. So, he went to the office and talked to the Major (He believes his name was Major Manual) of the PXs. After Dad explained the situation to the Major, the Major told Dad that he would fix it. The Major took Dad back to the PX and in front of the other clerks asked Dad if he wanted to be manager. Dad said only on the condition that they would re-hire Esther as his assistant. You see Dad only had an 8th grade education and with Esther having a college degree he figured she could do the “book work” and he could do the “people work”. The Major agreed and Dad became the manager. He stayed at the camp until the war was over. Because Dad did not have any job to go back to, and nothing to show that he had worked at the Camp or done anything during the war, he asked the Major for something to show that he had. He received a letter of recommendation from the Commander of Camp Ellis at the time.

This is his story in a nutshell. I have attached some memorabilia from my Aunt Ruth Sloan—her Macomb USO club hostess card; a “NEW U.S.O. – Y.M.C.A. CLUB (NEGRO) placard; a Blue Arrow Motors, Inc. Weekly Ride Ticket Stamped August 13, 1942; a ticket for a benefit for Camp Ellis; PX-Form 21A-6M-11-43 payroll receipts for my Aunt Ruth showing her earnings of $.62 per hour.

Please also tell their story in your Camp Ellis documentary. I read Jan Van Doren’s recollection of her working in “the PX” at the Camp, but no mention of the other PX where my father and the other Black clerks worked. So, I would like to get their story told as well.

Thank You,
Laura Brooks
NEW U. S. O. -- Y. M. C. A. CLUB
[NEGRO]
204 S. RANDOLPH ST.  MACOMB, ILL.

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A SNACK OR A FULL MEAL
FROM 8 A.M. TO 12:00 DAILY

SPECIAL GROUPS
Service Mens’ Wives . . . . . . Daily
Teen Agers . . . Tues., & Thurs., 2 to 4 P.M.
U. S. O. Club Meetings . . Monday, 7:30 P.M.
Games, Music and Fun . . . EVERY NIGHT

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CHEERFUL ASSISTANCE
BRUCE IRVING, DIRECTOR

WELCOME . . EVERYBODY
BASKET BALL
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ATHLETIC FUND
CAMP ELLIS vs. HARLEM GLOBE TROTTERS
Special Soldier's Ticket
TEACHERS COLLEGE GYM
TEACHERS COLLEGE GYM
Admission .......... 8.22
Fed. Tax .......... .09
Total ............. 8.25
MACONB. ILLINOIS
TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 1944
GAME TIME — 8:00 P.M.
WEEKLY RIDE TICKET
GOOD FOR 12 RIDES
NO. 522

From MACOMB To Caterpillar, E. Peoria, Ill.
Caterpillar, E. Peoria, Ill., to MACOMB III.

Blue Arrow Motors, Inc.
LEWISTOWN, ILL.

Sold to CAMP ELLIS Date AUG 3 1942

NOT TRANSFERABLE

0 2 5 0 0

MACOMB USO CLUB
HOSTESS

Name Ruth Sloan