

HISTORY
OF THE
WAVES

NO. 28

NELLIE WELCH WAITE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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Interviewee: Nellie Welch Waite

Interviewer: Dr. Evelyn M. Cherpak

Subject: The History of the WAVES

Date: June 20, 1995

C: This is the first oral history interview with Nell Waite regarding her career in the WAVES in World War II. Today's date is June 20, 1995, and the interview is being conducted at her home on New Meadow Road in Barrington, RI. Nell, it's a pleasure meeting you, and I'm so happy that you consented to give us your reminiscences of your time in the WAVES in World War II as a storekeeper. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you when and where you were born?

W: I was born in Barrington, RI, June 28, 1922.

C: What did your father do for a living?

W: My father was with the Providence Gas Company and he was credit manager.

C: What did your mother do?

W: She stayed home and took care of four children.

C: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

W: I had two brothers and a sister.

C: Did you spend your growing up years in the Barrington area?

W: Yes, between my house in West Barrington and my grandparents house in Hampton Meadows.

C: Where did you go to elementary school?

W: George T. Baker on Lincoln Avenue in Barrington.

C: And high school?

W: At old Barrington High School; that's now the senior citizen center.

C: When did you graduate from high school?

W: 1940.

C: So this was before the war. Did you have plans to go to work or did you prepare to go to college?

W: I did both.

C: What did you do first? Go to college first?

W: I liked working so much that I didn't go back to college.

C: Did you attend a college at all?

W: No.

C: Where did you go to work after graduation?

W: I went to the telephone company in Providence and worked in disbursing and accounting doing payrolls.

C: Similar to your father. You must have inherited that ability in math and working with figures. Did you like your job there?

W: Yes, I did. I really enjoyed the people I worked with.

C: Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941?

W: Yes. We were in our living room on Townsend Street in West Barrington. My mother was in Memorial Hospital and we rushed up to see her and tell her what had happened.

C: What was your reaction to the bombing?

W: Sorrow to think that this could happen.

C: And perhaps fear of an impending war?

W: Yes. Well, we knew that was inevitable.

C: Did your family have any Navy connections?

W: Oh, yes.

C: And what were they?

W: My father was in Newport, RI in World War I at the Naval Hospital, and he came from Cincinnati, Ohio. I had an uncle who was a career man. He made chief warrant at a very early age.

C: Did any of your brother or sisters go into the war?

W: No. My brother went to the Naval Academy, but the war was over when he graduated:

C: How did you hear about the WAVES?

W: Well, I don't remember. We just knew that we saw some, I suppose, not very many in Providence back then.

C: What was your impression of the WAVES prior to your joining?

W: I don't know just that they were a group of women who were serving their time, and we were all very patriotic in those days.

C: Why did you decide to join the Navy versus the other services?

W: Well, let's see. All our boyfriends were gone. I don't suppose that was the main reason. Just something different I suppose, and to serve.

C: So patriotism you'd say and service motivated you?

W: Yes. There was a great deal of that.

C: When did you decide to join the WAVES?

W: It must have been in the fall of '43.

C: Did any of your friends join at that time? Your high school and working friends?

W: Yes. One of my working friends. We left at the same time, went up to Boston, were sworn in and get all our papers and so forth and then left within a month of that time.

C: So by, let's say, November '43, you were a full fledged WAVE?

W: October.

C: How did your parents feel about your joining?

W: They thought it was wonderful. They were very patriotic. My father had been in the service and my mother lost a brother in World War I. I came from a very patriotic family.

C: So there were no objections at all?

W: No.

C: Was there any publicity in the local papers about your joining?

W: I do believe there was something in the *Warren-Barrington Gazette*.

C: They often did give the ladies some press when they did join. Where did you go for training and indoctrination?

W: Hunter College in the Bronx, New York, and then on to Atlanta.

C: Well, let's just stop a little bit and see what we can remember about Hunter College in the Bronx where you went for training and indoctrination. Where did you live during this basic training period?

W: We lived in apartment houses that had been taken over, and they served as dormitories. There was one room where we could sit and other than that there were bunk beds in all the other rooms.

C: How many in your room?

W: I believe there were four.

C: Were these gals from New England?

W: Most of them were from the Boston area. New Hampshire-- northern New England.

C: So they kind of put you together during that time frame. Do you remember who any of these gals were?

W: I remember, yes, some. I remember Phyllis Weir and I don't know where she came from. I believe around Lynn. Then there was another girl by the name of Waite who came from that same area.

C: Did you maintain any contact with these people after?

W: No. We were only at Hunter for such a short time.

C: Do you remember what kinds of classes you had to take at Hunter?

W: I can't remember at all. I know we did take classes, but I can't remember what they were.

C: Did you have any trouble adjusting to military life at Hunter?

W: Just getting up so early in the morning.

C: Were your days very full there?

W: Very full. When we weren't marching to class (we were in class all day), then we would have chores to do when we got back

such as cleaning our apartments. They had to be spotless because they did come in with white gloves and go over everything.

C: So that kept you busy. Did you enjoy the marching and the parade drills?

W: Not necessarily, but we did it.

C: What didn't you like about it?

W: Well, it was a little regimented. I have a vague recollection that we did go into New York and we marched in a parade. Now that was fun. But I can't remember what the occasion was.

C: Did you like the discipline of military life?

W: I didn't mind it.

C: You adjusted easily?

W: Yes. At home we were fairly well disciplined.

C: I guess those were the days when people were more disciplined. Did you like being on your own?

W: Yes. I missed my family--we were a very close family.

C: Did you keep in contact and write letters?

W: Oh yes, and telephone calls in those days. I had a friend on the base whose wife was a telephone operator in Brooklyn and she used to put free calls through for me. She's probably gone to her grave by now so I'm safe in saying that.

C: Oh well, that's good. Did you like the uniforms that were issued to you?

W: Yes. We had to wear a uniform. I think they were the most attractive of any of the services.

C: That's what a lot of the ladies have said. Was it mandatory during that time frame to attend church?

W: I think possibly at Hunter, but I don't think it was after that.

C: Did you have to march to church in a group?

W: We marched everywhere. We marched to class, everywhere we went we marched in groups.

C: What did you think of the Navy food?

W: It wasn't like home, but it wasn't that bad.

C: You survived that. Did you get any time off during your basic training?

W: Just occasional. I remember my parents coming up to New York for a weekend and taking me out for dinner, but I think I had to be back on the base within a certain time that evening.

C: Oh sure, limited time off. After the six weeks were over, you were selected for a specialty and what specialty was that?

W: Storekeeper. That was payrolls and that sort of thing.

C: Was that something you wanted to do? Did you request it?

W: Yes.

C: Oh, you did. So you got what you wanted which was very good. Did you need any additional training for that?

W: No. I said I didn't want any. I thought I was pretty well trained already. I did not want to go back to school. It was

something I felt I knew and it was a very easy adjustment for me. Different kind of payroll but much the same principle.

C: Was there a Storekeeper's School?

W: Yes. There was one, I believe, in Milledgeville.

C: So where were you directly sent to then?

W: Atlanta. I asked to go south.

C: Why?

W: Well, at that time the boy that I was going with was in Jacksonville. That was my main reason.

C: Was he in the Navy?

W: Yes.

C: So you thought you'd be near.

W: Yes.

C: Well, that was good thinking. What was your rate when you went to Atlanta?

W: A Disbursing Clerk STRIKER.

C: How did you get there from New York?

W: Train.

C: Did you go with a group?

W: Yes. And then we separated. I guess they all went to their own ... you know that's all so vague to me. We were all so tired. I do remember arriving on the base.

C: Where was the base located?

W: Outside of Atlanta. North of Atlanta, in Chamblee, Georgia.

C: Was it a large base?

W: No, very small.

C: And this was the Naval Air Station, Atlanta?

W: Yes. We had all kinds of schools and instrument flight schools. It was primarily an air station so it was all surrounded around the fliers.

C: Were there actual fields there where airplanes would come in?

W: Yes. It was a small field. I can remember hurricanes in Florida and they would send the planes up from Jacksonville to our base so they'd be far enough inland away from the winds and the damage.

C: When you got to Atlanta where were you assigned to work? Did you work with other WAVES there?

W: And civilians.

C: Were there lots of civilians on the base?

W: Oh, yes, a lot of civil service workers.

C: Do you remember what your pay was?

W: Very little. It was probably about \$48.00 as a STRIKER. Maybe it was \$78. I don't really remember.

C: Did you have most of your needs taken care of by the Navy?

W: Yes. Other than if we wanted to go out to dinner ourselves somewhere. There were all kinds of special entertainments on the base.

C: Such as?

W: Dances, plays, things of that nature.

C: So the Navy provided a lot of recreation for you.

W: Yes, there was a lot of things going on for us.

C: How many hours did you work per day?

W: Probably seven or eight hours unless we had duty. And, then, of course we had to be there in the evening, also. But we could go back to our barracks after, and if they needed us for anything, they'd call.

C: Did you work on weekends at all?

W: If it was necessary. Seldom was it necessary.

C: So basically what were you doing during these eight hours as a storekeeper?

W: I did payrolls. People would come in and out and need special money to get home or for an emergency or they were leaving for the west coast and didn't have any money so we'd have to provide them with funds. We did transportation requests, and I also did the routing of people who were going from our base, most of them were going from there to the west coast to ship out. I always tried to route them so they could go somewhere near home and be able to spend a few days there before they left. And no one ever complained, so I did it.

C: Do you remember how many people were in your office? Was it large?

W: Let's see. There was the disbursing officer and then there was his assistant, who was usually a chief warrant. We had two female paymasters during that time.

C: Was it unusual to be a female paymaster?

W: I suppose not, but they came in later. We had several men and then later there were two women who served in that capacity. There were probably about twenty of us in the office. Some civil service.

C: How were you treated by the men?

W: With a lot of respect. They were very nice people. They were kind. We were invited to their homes by their wives and had dinner. We were just very well treated. I had no complaints.

C: No discrimination, no harassment?

W: No, not in those days. I can remember one incident of a navy flyer who came in and he wanted special pay. He had his records with him, but he had just had special pay, so I had to deny his request and he swore at me. And I went into the paymaster's office and I told him. He got that man and he waltzed him topside and they called me in. I know he was reprimanded, how badly I never knew, and I never wanted to find out. That's the only time in the three and one-half years that I was there that I ever met anyone who wasn't anything but a gentleman. There wasn't anyone there who ever stepped out of line.

C: That's a wonderful statement on the armed services at that point in time. Where did you live when you were in Atlanta at the Air Station?

W: We had barracks. We had little cubby hole rooms in those barracks. Usually there were four of us, but as we got older and we graduated we went to the rooms where you had two beds in a room and then, of course, there were ample showers.

C: Were these wooden structures?

W: Yes.

C: How did you fare in the heat in Atlanta?

W: It was hot and no air conditioning, so we had windows open. And I can remember one night we took our mattresses outside and slept out on the grass in back of the barracks.

C: That must have been against regulations.

W: I'm sure it was but nobody complained.

C: It must have been fierce, especially in the summer and spring down there. Did you make any friendships in Atlanta that were lasting?

W: Yes. Some that lasted for years. Some of them are gone now, but they were all from a distance. They all lived in different parts of the country. And then you'd lose track of so many other people.

C: Were these gals in other specialties?

W: Yes. Now Mary Underwood came from a small town in Indiana and Geraldine Griffith came from somewhere around there in Georgia, and she made chief. She stayed. You were given that option when the war was over and she and Mary both stayed. I think both of them made chief. Mary ended up marrying the disbursing officer on base who came at the end of the war.

C: I think a lot of women did meet their future husbands in the service at that time. Did you have an opportunity at all during this time frame to go to Jacksonville to see your beau?

W: No, he came up to see me before he went overseas.

C: What did you do for recreation in Atlanta?

W: We went to the movies. There were all kinds of dances and that sort of thing. There was a boy that I knew from Pawtucket who was stationed close by. He was in the Army and he invited me to his area for dances. Then they always had something going on. I remember going to one up in Gainesville, Georgia. The band went and all the Admin building went. I met a fellow I knew from Swansea, Massachusetts. So it's a small world when you come right down to it.

C: Right and you feel very chummy with those people. Were there other bases around that area?

W: Oglethorpe Army Base. That was Oglethorpe Hospital. These were mostly ambulatory cases. When they landed they used our field to land. Then they were taken into Chamblee, Georgia. That's all I can think of.

C: So basically Oglethorpe, but you had other military people in the area too.

W: But that wasn't Fort Oglethorpe. That was just the hospital. It had nothing to do with the old Fort Oglethorpe.

C: Did you go to Atlanta at all with WAVE friends?

W: Oh, yes. We went in there all the time. Woody Herman was there and we went there for his concerts, and I had a cousin who was stationed close by and he would come to visit and take us all out for dinner which was very nice. There were some beautiful big hotels in Atlanta and the big name bands would come there so that was fun.

C: Oh, yes. The big bands of the '40s and the wonderful music that they played.

W: And all the jitterbugging.

C: What did you like about your assignment in Atlanta?

W: I suppose the people I met more than anything else.

C: Was there anything about it that you didn't like about your work assignment?

W: No. I can't think of anything that I didn't like because it was pretty much what I did as a civilian.

C: So you were well trained.

W: Yes. And often, as I said before, so many people that I knew came through Atlanta going somewhere else that I had known here in RI. It was amazing. You'd look up and there would be a face through the glass. We were all caged in. That's where all the money was. Oh, and I did go with the paymaster to pay the people, both enlisted and personnel. We were paid twice a month, I believe. We would pay the officers in one pay line and then the next time we would pay all the enlisted personnel.

C: In cash?

W: In cash.

C: No checks or direct deposits in those days. Did you meet anybody famous or interesting in Atlanta, and can you tell me about these people?

W: Yes. I didn't meet him myself, I just know he was on the base and that was Errol Flynn. He was a friend of a Marine officer and in the wardroom there were a group of young aviators and they had made up a song and they started singing, "Mother, mother get your daughters in, here comes Mr. Errol Flynn." And with that they walked through the door and all of those boys were put on report.

C: Well, Errol Flynn had quite a reputation.

W: And then Tyrone Power was also there. He was a Marine. We had Marine detachments on the base. At that time he was married to Annabella and she would wait outside at the gate for him when he went through at night and everybody rushed to the window to pay him if he came in for special pay because everybody wanted to talk to him.

C: Did you ever have a chance to talk to him?

W: Oh, yes. He was very shy and very quiet. Whether that was a pose or he was actually shy, but he seemed to be sincere.

C: Was he as handsome as he looked?

W: Oh, yes. Very nice looking.

C: That's very interesting. And you mentioned a football player when we talked.

W: That was Bill Tweedel. He was from the University of Michigan, I believe. It would have been, of course, a long, long time ago, and he lived in a house close to the base and my friends and I would go over there all the time. He and his wife would have us over there for dinner and we would babysit with his children and he and his wife were just wonderful to us.

C: So you met some famous people or heard about some famous people during this time frame. Did the WAVES have a strong sense of purpose and esprit de corps?

W: I believe so. We stuck together. I certainly think that, yes, everybody was eager for the war to be over, but everybody was well aware of why they were there.

C: Did you like living in such close quarters with the other girls?

W: No, you had very little privacy. Everybody tried and we had other rooms, living areas, that we could go to and sit down and write letters. We were well-equipped with all kinds of things, desks and that sort of thing.

C: Did you have a refectory or a dining hall right within your barracks?

W: No. We went to a separate mess hall.

C: Did you keep up with news about the war through the newspapers or newsreels?

W: Oh, yes.

C: How did you feel about the war?

W: I thought it was a terrible thing, but I knew why we were there. After they bombed Pearl Harbor, we didn't have much choice but to be there. We lost many many people.

C: Was there anybody that you knew that passed through the station that was killed in the war that you found out about?

W: Yes.

C: So that was tragic.

W: Yes, it was always tragic. You'd get a letter from home telling you of someone. A boy who lived right up the road here

was engaged to my best friend. He was shot down over Yugoslavia. So there were so many dying.

C: What happened to your boyfriend?

W: Well, he made it through. He came home and we were engaged. I broke my engagement and married Arnold. Arnold wasn't on the scene at the time, but I decided that we had both changed too much.

C: Yes, I think that happens to some people. I know some gals mention that. Did you write letters home describing your experiences in your daily life as a WAVE?

W: Oh yes, more or less. Told them what we were doing, where we had gone, who we had seen and so forth.

C: Too bad we don't have those. They're collector's items.

W: I'm sure.

C: Where were you on VJ Day? Do you remember, in August '45?

W: I certainly do. We had been watching; we could look out through the main gate and across to an old tree across from the base and it had a knoll. All of a sudden we saw people stashing.

These sailors were coming along and they'd stash stuff in there. We couldn't imagine what it was. We found out they were stashing bottles for the celebration. They knew it was coming. And the town went wild that night. I can remember riding through downtown Atlanta in a convertible sitting up on top just waving banners and screaming and flags. I think we were all hoarse to death the next day.

C: So that's what you did on that evening.

W: That's what we did.

C: So the others felt equally as exuberant?

W: We were all glad that it was over and we could go home and everyone we knew would come home and life would get back to normal again.

C: Well, you stayed in the service after August because most WAVES were in for the duration and six months. Did you remain in Atlanta?

W: Yes. We had to make up the transportation requests and the payrolls for all the people who were being discharged and going home. So we were there for quite a while after. I didn't get home until the end of February of '46.

C: Were there thousands of people passing through the station?

W: No, I wouldn't say thousands. There were a lot of different people coming through. We had to get all the records ready for them. It was a small station; it wasn't huge and the workload depended on where these people were going.

C: So that's how they arranged it, I guess, depending on whether they were going home. Did you ever have a chance to meet Mildred MacAfee, the WAVES Director?

W: No, I never did.

C: Did you encounter any disciplinary problems in the WAVES, or did you know of any WAVES who were disciplined for any reason and what were those reasons?

W: Yes. The girl who was pregnant, which I thought was very sad. She was being discharged. She was very unhappy and in tears and, unfortunately, the man who she had been going with she thought was going to marry her and he was already married. Those things happened in those days, too. Not as many you might expect. That's the only person I knew who was in that predicament. There were other disciplinary actions such as the officer who swore at me when he wanted special pay and he couldn't have special pay because he had just drawn it, and so I

went into my paymaster and Mr. Tweedel championed all our causes and he went topside and spoke to the CO and that man was put on report.

C: Did any other WAVES disobey or were called on the carpet for anything that they did?

W: I'm sure they were. But all of those things sort of fade.

C: Unless it was something really outstanding. Did you have any preconceived expectations when you entered the WAVES?

W: No, I don't think so. I just knew there would be restrictions and that life would not be the same. That we would have to toe the line oftentimes, but if you had led a fairly disciplined life you don't have any problem with that.

C: Did you have any opportunities for athletic recreation during this time frame?

W: There were tennis courts. We'd go on hikes just the group of us that wanted to and we always on Sunday morning went over to Kelly's restaurant in Chamblee, Georgia, which was about the only thing in Chamblee for breakfast. I suppose it was a couple of miles over and a couple of miles back so we walked and then we'd have to walk to Oglethorpe University which was then defunct and

catch the trolley into Atlanta and unless we took a taxicab back we would have to walk from Oglethorpe back to the base. Trolleys were not very expensive. It seems to me they were a dime.

C: So you were in good shape.

W: Oh yes, I was slim. We had tennis courts and that sort of thing. There was always something going on. Movies or some sort of entertainment.

C: Did they have any swimming because of the heat?

W: No, we didn't have any pools.

C: That's too bad; you need that in the heat. What opportunities did the WAVES provide you that you didn't have in civilian life, if any?

W: You know, I can't think of any.

C: Did you feel that you were challenged in your job?

W: I guess we just did it matter-of-factly. I had never done transportation requests and we had these big books and we would have to call the train stations because there were very few planes flying other than military in those days, so we would

route people to wherever they were going and then we would call and see if that was the best way they had to getting there and we sent them close to home if we could.

C: Did you have any extended leaves during this almost three-year time frame that you were in Atlanta?

W: Only for a week at a time, but often times if there was a flight going to Quonset and I was in the Ad building, I could go topside and get my name on the form and get home for just a weekend. One weekend we were fogged in and I called the duty officer and told him what had happened and that was alright, as long as you called and they knew. Then the pilots called me in Barrington to tell me when they were ready to leave and my father took me down to Quonset.

C: How often did you go home for a weekend?

W: Quite often. I made all my friends' weddings. It was fun. If there was a flight and often times we'd go. Oh, it was a long day though, and you sat on a bucket for a seat because there weren't any comfortable seats in those training planes. But it was a way of getting home as well as an inexpensive way of getting home.

C: Were these free flights?

W: Oh, yes.

C: That's fantastic. Did you come home on a week break if you had it?

W: Yes. I suppose sometimes it amounted to ten days. I only remember once having to take the train and I remember how terribly crowded those trains were and there was no air conditioning and they would open the windows and it would be messy and hot and they'd run out of water. Those water coolers on those things, everybody would be tapping them. The water would be gone. It wasn't the most pleasant way to travel.

C: Did you go any other place besides home on your leaves?

W: No, I always headed home.

C: Did you have to spend Christmas and Thanksgiving in Atlanta?

W: I don't think I ever got home for Thanksgiving, but I think I was home for one Christmas.

C: And the others you had to spend there. Did they do anything special for the holidays on the base?

W: Not necessarily. Yes, they had big dinners, that sort of thing, and they might have a band or a dance or something I suppose. I do know we had a lot of dances there and we had our own station band. That's all I can think of.

C: Were there any extra curricula activities that you could participate in, in an organized fashion, such as singing groups?

W: They did have choral groups for those who wanted to join. There were different things like that. We put on an operetta; we did plays (all local talent) and everybody, if you didn't act in it, you helped with costumes and that sort of thing.

C: A lot of camaraderie and organized activity there.

W: You lived so closely you had to do this.

C: Were you promoted at all during this three year period?

W: Yes to 3rd class Petty Officer. The two girls that I was friendliest with stayed and made chief after the war.

C: Did the WAVE experience and the war change or redirect your life in any way?

W: I think I grew up in a hurry. You see a lot of sadness. You hear of a lot of people that were killed or maimed and there were a lot of very sad things that happened. As I think I told you before, a friend of ours from Barrington was killed in a plane crash.

C: Did the war make you more independent and self-reliant?

W: I think so. I had depended on my family so much. I was also older. I grew up. I learned to do a lot for myself and depend on myself.

C: Did it broaden your horizons?

W: I think possibly it did. Meeting people from other places.

C: Do you feel that what women were expected to do and to be changed when the war was over?

W: I think the whole world changed when the war was over. Not just women. Nothing ever went back to what it was.

C: Right. War seems to have a destructive effect on society. Well, you mustered out in February 1946. Where did you settle after the war?

W: Back in Barrington.

C: And did you go back to your job with the phone company?

W: It was waiting for me, yes.

C: Did you meet your husband during this time frame?

W: I met my husband when I was at Barrington High School and he was at Bristol, Colt Memorial High and he took me to his junior prom. That's when I first met him and then I didn't see him again until the war was over and I was engaged to someone else.

C: Where did you meet up with your husband again after the war was over?

W: Out at what is now Eileen Darlings; it was then a Howard Johnsons, I believe, or Dutchlands. I forget which. And I was there having dinner with my mother and some friends of hers and this fellow walked in and he came over to me and he said, "Aren't you Nellie Welch?" or "Are you still Nellie Welch?" And I said, "yes, I am" and it was Arnold. He said goodbye, walked away and my mother said, "Oh, there's that nice Waite boy." Oh, he said to me, "Are you married," and I said, "no, just engaged." Then I was down at the Warren Hotel one night and a friend of his was in there and I had broken my engagement and he looked at my finger

and said "where's your ring" and I said, "I broke my engagement," and the next day I heard from Arnold.

C: Wow! The grapevine worked very fast.

W: It worked in my favor.

C: What branch of the service did he serve in?

W: Army Air Corps.

C: Where was he located?

W: University of Denver in Cadets, and then he had Rheumatic Fever and they told him he would never fly again and the next thing they did was send him to Aerial Gunners school. But he was ready to ship out when the war was over, so he never went overseas.

C: So he never saw action. That's good. When were you married?

W: May 10, 1947, right over here at St. John's Episcopal Church.

C: Did you settle in Barrington after the war as well?

W: Yes, for probably three years. My mother had died and I had a brother who was still in high school so we stayed with my father and my brother for three years and then my father remarried and we bought a house in Riverside on Leroy Drive, a little Dutch Colonial. We thought it was the most wonderful house in the world. We only lived there three years and Arnold was transferred to New York and so we. (PAUSE FOR PHONE CALL)

C: Now you were telling me that you had lived in many places in the United States. Did you work at all during this time frame?

W: No, I took care of my children. Women didn't work then particularly. Very few did.

C: Right, very few. If your husband had a good job you stayed at home. How did you finally come back to Barrington?

W: We retired back here ten years ago. We came back every summer. We had a summer house in Little Compton, so we kept our Rhode Island connections. Then we settled here back in Barrington just about ten years ago.

C: Well, it's a beautiful community and you were involved, you told me, in the antiques business. Did you have a store?

W: I had a shop and I did shows. I did a lot of shows all over the country. So we would go to upstate New York and to Pennsylvania and Ohio when we lived there and we still went back after we moved here.

C: That's fascinating. How did you get interested in that?

W: I was always interested. As long as I can remember, I loved old things.

C: Must be your New England heritage.

W: Must be.

C: Are you a member of the Ocean State WAVES and WAVES National?

W: Yes, I am.

C: Have you ever gone to any of their conferences? They have annual conferences.

W: No. I have not gone to any of the conferences.

C: Some of the other WAVES told me that there were WAVES meetings, not as organized as the current ones are, after the war, immediately in the post-war period in Boston.

W: I know nothing about those.

C: Those reunions were probably more local. How would you sum up your naval career and its significance for you and your life?

W: Well, I think it probably did me a lot of good. I was very sheltered, had lived in a community where we knew everyone, where my grandparents lived and, finally, once I was out on my own and I learned to stand on my own two feet I think it gave me a lot of backbone.

C: Well, that's great. The Navy helped in maturing and growing. Is there anything else you'd want to add about your experiences in the Navy? Anything that we've not covered.

W: I'm trying to think of what we haven't covered. No, I've told you that I had a brother that went through Annapolis, so we've been a gung ho Navy family all through these years.

C: And he reached the rank of rear admiral.

W: That's right and President of the War College.

C: He was there when I was there. I remember him well.

W: He remembers you. I told him you were coming and he said, "Oh, I remember this girl." We used to have some great times down there, coming down to the house and when people were leaving and coming in and change of command and so forth. Very interesting.

C: Graduations and the like.

W: Yes.

C: Well, I want to thank you so much for your reminiscences and your cooperation with us in our program to document the history of the WAVES in World War II.

W: I think it's wonderful that somebody's doing this.

C: Thank you very much!

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