

HISTORY
OF THE
WAVES

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MARY V. MAGUIRE

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THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

Interviewee: Mary V. Maguire

Interviewer: Evelyn M. Cherpak

Subject: The History of the WAVES

Date: December 1, 1995

EC: This is the first oral history interview with Mary V. Maguire. I am at her home on 59 Beach Road in Little Compton, RI. Mary was an officer in the WAVES in World War II. Mary, I'm so pleased that you've consented to participate in our oral history program this morning, and I'm looking forward to recording your reminiscences of your time in the WAVES in World War II. I'd like to begin by asking when and where you were born?

MM: I was born in Providence, RI on June 20, 1918.

EC: What did your father do for a living?

MM: He was first a General Building contractor. He was an engineer as well and founded his engineering firm in 1938.

EC: Was that the famous Charles A. Maguire?

MM: Yes.

EC: Oh, for heaven sake. They have an office in my hometown in New Britain.

MM: Of course. Yes, that's right.

EC: Isn't that amazing. It's an enormous firm.

MM: Oh, yes. Well, first the building business was founded by my grandfather, Charles B. Maguire, in about the late 1890s, early 1900s, I think. And my father and my uncle took over the business, when my grandfather died in 1919. The building business, that part of his life ended in 1933, I think it was. But anyway, he founded the engineering firm in 1938, and it went on to be really extensive in RI, particularly with the Navy in World War II which is how this all came about.

EC: Isn't that amazing! What did your mother do?

MM: My mother died when I was thirteen. She died in 1931. Before she married, she was a graduate of Our Lady of the Elms, which was a junior college in Chicopee, Mass. and then she went to Katherine Gibbs and she did secretarial work until she married my father. She married my father when she was twenty-three.

EC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MM: No. My father married again in 1933. He married Corrine Walsh Casey who had a son, Charles Casey. He was ten and I was fifteen when they were married. We were a very close family.

EC: Great! Where did you spend your growing up years?

MM: In Providence.

EC: Where did you graduate from high school and when?

MM: Classical High School, Providence, in 1936.

EC: In the heart of the Depression.

MM: Yes.

EC: Did you decide to go to college then?

MM: Immediately. I had planned to go to Trinity in Washington because my mother (my own mother) had wanted me to go there. My grandmother had been on the ladies auxiliary board that raised money for the foundation of the college which was in 1900, I believe.

EC: What did you major in?

MM: French.

EC: Oh, very good.

MM: I went to Paris my senior year.

EC: Oh, how wonderful. That must have been great.

MM: It was. 1938-39. I got home about five weeks before war was declared. I lived with a French family in Paris. It was an absolutely wonderful year.

EC: I can imagine it would have been. What did you prepare to do after graduation?

MM: Well, I had thought I was going to go to library school. I was accepted at Columbia, but at that time I really had never worked because during the Depression it was hard to get jobs, even part time jobs. The men needed the jobs, so my father, through a friend at the New England Telephone Company, found out about a job there. I was interviewed in the engineering department. I was a drafting clerk in the engineering department in Providence. I decided not to go library school at that time. I worked for the telephone company until I joined the Navy.

EC: When did you join the Navy?

MM: I was sworn in in December of 1942.

EC: Did your family have any Navy connections at all?

MM: Yes.

EC: They did, and what were those connections?

MM: Well, in World War I my grandfather, as the head of Charles B. Maguire Construction Company, built Coddington Point in Newport. And my father worked on that job. So that's probably my first Navy connection. My father did a lot of work on that job. As a matter of fact, he used to fly back and forth to Washington in one of these two-seater planes--an open cockpit plane, for my grandfather.

EC: So you knew about the Navy and the Navy in RI.

MM: Yes, I think a lot of us did because it was such a big facility in Newport.

EC: Were any of your friends joining the Navy when you enlisted?

MM: No. To continue on about my other connection to the Navy and how I came about this--my father's firm designed Coddington Cove. You see my grandfather did Coddington Point in WWI and my

father did Coddington Cove in WWII. Also, he did some work at Quonset Point. So we had moved to Newport in the Summer of '42 because it was hard to get gasoline, in spite of the fact that he had all this work--I think he had a B coupon or something--so we moved to Newport.

EC: Where did you live in Newport?

MM: We lived on Washington Street at the corner of Pine, right across from that little park. We lived there that summer. As a matter of fact, the PT boats used to come down from Melville early in the morning to pick up the torpedoes and you could hear them. I think it was the Cadillac engine, so you could hear them early in the morning as they went by the house. That summer my father came home one day and he said that one of the officers, I think it was civil engineer corps officers, told him that the Navy was planning a program for women and if you had a college degree you'd be eligible for a commission. So he came home and told me about it. Well, to be perfectly frank, I wasn't as enthusiastic as he was.

EC: Why weren't you that enthusiastic?

MM: Well, at that point I had a nice social life and things were going along well.

EC: Were you dating naval officers?

MM: Oh, yes. I mean that was what was going on in those days. I think he was pushing me out of the nest. But, in any event, it did interest me. He said, "You know, you're never going to regret that you were a veteran. Because in WWI he had wanted to go into the service, but he had had a bad automobile accident and he had a steel plate in his head from this accident so he was not accepted in the service. And, also, at the same time my brother, had gone to LaSalle Military Academy on Long Island, and had done his ROTC training in the summer time. He was only eighteen, had gone to Holy Cross. He was there for six weeks. They lowered the draft age to eighteen and he picked up his commission. Because up to that time one would leave to be twenty-one. So he picked up his commission and he went off in the service.

EC: Did he join the Navy?

MM: Oh, no. He was Army. Actually he was a second lieutenant. The youngest officer from Rhode Island when he went away. He was infantry; later paratrooper and was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. But you want more on my Navy career.

EC: Right.

MM: So anyway I joined and I was sworn in on December 8th '42.

EC: Where were you sworn in?

MM: Boston.

EC: Did you have to go up by yourself?

MM: Yes. Had to have a physical first which was interesting.

EC: That's what all the gals say. Did you have to take aptitude tests, too?

MM: Oh, yes. Yes, you did. You had to take that and the physical. I guess I had done that in October because I was sworn in on December 8th and then I reported to Northampton (Smith College) in January of '43.

EC: What did you find more attractive about the Navy rather than the other services the Army or the Coast Guard, for example, who were recruiting women?

MM: The Coast Guard were recruiting right after I went into the WAVES. Actually, as I say, it was the whole situation with my father being so enthusiastic about this and I really hadn't thought about the service until he talked to me about it. So it was just a natural move to go into the Navy.

EC: So you would say that your parents were very supportive then of your joining?

MM: Oh, yes. They thought it was a wonderful idea. Some of my friends had to talk their families into it. Quite often some of my WAVE friends in New York had said they really had to talk their families into it. I didn't have that problem. As I said, my father was the one who was so enthusiastic.

EC: Did any of your friends in Newport join?

MM: No. I didn't know that many people in Newport. My friends were mostly Providence friends.

EC: Did any of those join?

MM: Yes. There was a college friend of mine who was two years after me in college, but I didn't know her that well or know that she was joining. She joined after I did.

EC: Was there any publicity in the newspaper about your joining?

MM: I don't remember that there was. I don't think so.

EC: Well, you said you reported for U.S. Naval Midshipman School Training and Indoctrination in January of '43. Where did you go?

MM: Smith College in Northampton. I think I was the third class. I forgot when they started the classes, but I was the third class.

EC: It was in '42. Almost immediately after the legislation was passed on July 30, 1942 they began that.

MM: That's right. I gave you Jan Chafee's name and I think she was in the first class.

EC: How long were you there?

MM: Three months. I guess it was for ninety days. It was arduous, I must say.

EC: Why would you say it was arduous?

MM: Well, Northampton is not that friendly a climate, especially from January to April, and it was a strenuous physical training.

EC: What did you do physically? Do you remember?

MM: They had two programs. We had a gym program, but we also had drill. Also, we lived on the Smith College campus for the first month.

EC: In a dormitory?

MM: In a dormitory.

EC: And how many to a room? Do you remember?

MM: I don't remember (in the dormitory) how many there were, but after the first month when we were seamen, we became midshipmen and were moved to the Northampton Hotel.

EC: Oh, right. That's in downtown Northampton.

MM: That's right and the Navy had taken it over and they kept all the chefs and the food was wonderful.

EC: Well, that's good. Did you eat in the Wiggins Tavern?

MM: No. We had a big dining room, but it was the Wiggins Tavern chefs who prepared her food, including the wonderful pecan pie. But the room that I was in at Wiggins Tavern was over the front door. I think it must have been a single room prior to their time, but there were six of us in it.

EC: That must have been crowded quarters!

MM: It was.

EC: How did you like living with six girls?

MM: Well, number one, you didn't even think about those things, and we got along real well. And we were also divided alphabetically so that my roommates were...let's see there was McPhail, McVeigh, Maguire, Mader, Malone...and I remember Carolyn Malone was from Texas and she was very tall and she felt the cold terribly. We had one roommate who loved the fresh air and she'd have the windows wide open and in the morning when it was wake up call...

EC: What time was wake up call?

MM: Gosh, I don't remember.

EC: Must have been early.

MM: It was early. We'd call out six, five, four, three, two, one and one would be the last one who would have to get up. Number one, the last one, had to close the windows and get up. But the food was excellent; the exercise was strenuous but very good. We used to exercise in the Smith College gym and they would open up all the windows and we had these little cotton jumpers and we'd go in and there was no heat and they had us running around. This is the typical kind of physical training we had. And then we had to walk up the hill to classes because the

classes were held on the campus and we had to carry our books which were heavy besides which we had shots. Do you really want to hear all of this? You do? We had to have shots. We had to have smallpox, typhoid, tetanus. I think the typhoid was a series of three and we took the shots in the infirmary. The infirmary was a converted garage in downtown Northampton and we were to report there for our shots. Also, you had to have another physical after you had your preliminary physical in Boston. When you got to Northampton, you had to have another physical. Then you'd have the shots there. You stood in line outside the door of the garage and then they'd take you in, say three at a time. You'd bare your arm and you'd get the shot. Of course, it was pretty cold. You always seemed to have a sore arm. And we'd march up the hill to class and we'd shift our books, and everybody would groan because they had a sore arm from the shot.

EC: Did you make any permanent friendships from your roommates in that training period?

MM: Oh, yes. Two of my roommates reported to Ninety Church Street New York City along with me so we remained roommates in New York for about a year. Then we split up and one of them, Fran McVeigh, and I had an apartment together for the rest of the time and we remained friends after the war.

EC: Oh, good. Is she still around?

MM: She died a few years ago. And I hear from Betty McPhail who lives out in Colorado. I hear from her at Christmas. I also have a close friend, Bernice Whitman Bernanke whom I met at ESF who is a widow living in N.Y. She was also at the reunion. I also made friends in San Diego with Kay Goodwin (from Louisiana) who married a naval officer from Providence, Bill Riley. They were married in Providence in August of 1946. I was maid of honor at their wedding and am godmother to their oldest son. She died about 10 years ago but I have remained a close friend of the family since then.

EC: Getting back to Northampton could you, if you remember, tell me how your day was structured?

MM: That's kind of a blur. We had classes naturally and we had to march up and down the hill which was always covered with ice at that time of the year. We alternated the gym classes with drill and the drill was held in an armory on the main street in Northampton.

EC: Were the drills once a week, or were they daily?

MM; I think they were alternating, but I don't remember. Maybe drill was twice a week and gym three times a week and then the

next week it was the other way around. Here's an interesting thing about our classes. We were pretty much trained in communications because at that time the submarine warfare by the Germans in the Atlantic was really heavy and so the Navy needed communications officers and if you were under the age of twenty-five pretty much you went into communications because you had to stand watches around the clock which was physically demanding. So, because it was communications, you had to know how to type and the first thing they did was ask you what your proficiency was in typing. Well, I had learned the keyboard in junior high school, hadn't used it too much, but I thought, well, I'm not that good, so I said I was a beginner, not realizing probably it was the smartest thing I ever did, because they divided you according to your proficiency in typing. The first day that we went into typing class there was a WAVE ensign, a very nice looking person, who had been a typing teacher, and she stood in front of us and she really was very neat, and she said, "I know all of you, you said nobody's going to get me in back of a typewriter. Well, there it is and there you are and you're not going to get your commission until you can type sixty words a minute." I got up to sixty words a minutes fairly soon because I did know the keyboard and I had not planned this. So I was up to sixty words a minute about halfway through the time but some of my classmates had a terrible time, and they were taking their exam almost the night before they were commissioned.

EC: Well, it is difficult to be accurate. Sixty words a minute is quite a lot.

MM: Oh, sure. We did type on the Western Union typewriter. It was all capitals which made it easier. But I always remember that that's how you were graded. So my platoon was the platoon, as I remember, who weren't the greatest typists. I'm foggy on that but anyway we could drill. We were very good.

Mrs. Roosevelt came to review the company when I was there.

EC: That's fantastic!

MM: We went into the armory and she came down and watched us drill.

EC: Did you have a chance to shake her hand?

MM: No.

EC: Well, that was very supportive of her to do that.

MM: Oh yes, she was very supportive.

EC: Do you remember what other classes you took besides typing at Naval Midshipman School?

MM: We took recognition, you know, of ships and aircraft and that kind of thing. We took communications and I'm a little bit foggy on that because everything was so classified that you really didn't talk too much about your courses or what you were studying.

EC: Were all your instructors WAVES?

MM: Yes, except the drill instructor. One was a man and one was a woman. I don't remember that we had male instructors. We could have. It's kind of a blur to me on that score. It was very intense for three months; it really was.

EC: Did you ever meet Captain Underhill who was then the Director of the school? Was his presence ever made known?

MM: Not that I remember personally. I can remember Helen Jacobs, the tennis player. She was on the administrative staff of the WAVES.

EC: Did Mildred McAfee, the first Director of the WAVES, ever come to Smith?

MM: I think she might have come with Mrs. Roosevelt. I would imagine she did. As I say, I don't remember those particulars. I just remember that the three months were intensive. I'll tell

you with all the exercise we had to do and drilling, everybody looked great. The uniforms were very good looking, as you know, and they were supplied by Filenes, I think, in Boston. They had a battery of tailors that came in and fitted you to the uniforms, and they were good looking.

EC: Very smart. Did you have any time for any social life at all during this period?

MM: No. You were able to have a weekend pass. I can't remember how often. But it was very strict. You had to fill out an application for it, and if you made any mistake on that application you were turned down. I was visiting some people in Suffield, Connecticut, for a weekend and they lived on Main Street, but they didn't have a number so I put Main Street, Suffield, and I was called in and I had to put a street number down. They almost weren't going to give me the pass.

EC: Oh, they were strict. Did you have any trouble at all adjusting to military life?

MM: You mean in training?

EC: Yes.

MM: No. I didn't actually.

EC: Did you like the discipline of military life?

MM: Well, it was just something you did. I didn't find it difficult. I think I probably was fairly disciplined at home.

EC: That's what a lot of the gals say.

MM: Yes. And you did what you were expected to do.

EC: Without questioning.

MM: Yes. I will tell you a couple of funny things though. Those of us who were very short had to wait for our heavy overcoats, and so I could remember the first month I was wearing a tweed coat that I had worn as a civilian. I had my uniform, a brown tweed coat and my little hat. As a seaman you wore a hat that said "U.S. Navy" on it, before you got your midshipman cap, and we were sort of at the end of the platoon, those of us who were short, and we marched along in our civilian coats and it was really funny. One of my classmates was from Georgia and she really felt the cold and she said to me, "If my mommy and daddy could ever see me now, they wouldn't believe it," marching up and down those snow covered hills in our civilian coats.

EC: Did anything else amusing happen during your training period that you can think of?

MM: I remember I was a scout which meant that you went ahead of the platoon to stop the traffic at the cross streets. You came down the hill from the campus to go to the hotel and there was a major cross street at the foot of the hill, and this was like six o'clock in the morning as I recall; it was still dark and these big trucks would be going through. You'd have to stand out there and stop the traffic and it was pretty scary because you didn't know whether they'd see you, especially when you were kind of short. I remember the time that I was appointed the scout. I mean we all took our turns, and I found out that I was more afraid of those trucks than I was of anything else.

EC: Do you remember if there was a graduation or commissioning ceremony at the end of your training period? I think there was.

MM: I can't remember the day or the particulars, but yes and, of course, swearing to uphold the Constitution as an officer.

EC: Great. Well you graduated and where were you assigned next?

MM: I was assigned to Eastern Sea Frontier Commander, 90 Church Street, New York City.

EC: What did you do there?

(PAUSE TO LOOK THROUGH PAPERS)

EC: We were mentioning your assignment in New York at the Eastern Sea Frontier.

MM: I accepted my commission and executed the oath at Northampton on the 6th of April 1943. Then I went to Eastern Sea Frontier and... (PAUSE AGAIN TO LOOK THROUGH PAPERS)

EC: What department or area were you in?

MM: The command was an operational command. I was in distribution and an officer messenger there, or courier as they called it.

EC: Was your work classified?

MM: Highly classified.

EC: You must have had a SECRET clearance then.

MM: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I can remember I guess it was Navy intelligence, I presume, that did this. They came to my home in Providence and questioned the neighbors about me. And, also, after we reported to New York, three of us lived on East 10th Street.

EC: Was that a WAVES quarters?

MM: No. Officers had to get their own quarters. The enlisted girls, I think, lived at Manhattan Towers. The enlisted women were provided with quarters, but the officers had to get their own.

EC: So you lived in a small apartment then?

MM: We lived in Greenwich Village, which was three subway stops from 90 Church Street where we worked. Most of us lived there because it was handier. First I lived on East 10th Street and then I moved to Waverly Place which was off 6th Avenue.

EC: Did you work with a lot of WAVES at 90 Church Street?

MM: Yes. I think there were 126 of us. We replaced men for sea duty, and there was the code board and distribution. I was in distribution.

EC: When you say distribution, were you basically a messenger?

MM: No. The dispatches came out of the code board and then you routed them to the different commands within the Eastern Sea Frontier. Then after they were routed and the copies run off, you were either assigned to routing them or distributing them and we took turns on that. We stood watches around the clock.

EC: How long were the watches?

MM: For the officers they were nine hours. For the enlisted girls it was eight. We had a different watches. The code board had eight hour watches. We worked 9-5 o'clock for five days and then we had a swing. We went midnight to nine for three days. We had fifty-six hours off and then we went noon to eight and then nine to five.

EC: Yes, rotations of the time.

MM: As a matter of fact, I said I was never going to eat another egg. It's always breakfast.

EC: Did you have to work on weekends?

MM: Oh, yes. There was no such thing as weekends. On the fifty-six hours off that you got, occasionally I would come home. I got off at nine in the morning. I'd get the ten o'clock train out of Grand Central for Providence and I'd immediately fall asleep until I got to Providence.

EC: So you had time off then. You would go home.

MM: Not always but when I did it would be on the 56 hour off time.

EC: What did you like about this assignment?

MM: It was exciting. It was an operational command. Even now I'm reluctant to say what it involved. I know things have been declassified, but they handled the shipping, the convoys from Halifax to Guantanamo and then the Navy shipping in the Eastern Sea Frontier and then out of the Eastern Sea Frontier. As a matter of fact, the Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mary that took a whole division was an operation out of Eastern Sea Frontier, and they had a big magnetic board where they plotted all of the convoys and the ships. You could see where all the action was taking place. The assignments we had were distribution, routing, and then we manned the pneumatic tube, which was up on the mezzanine, and the officers that we delivered the dispatches to were on the mezzanine facing this board so you sat there for nine hours manning this tube.

EC: Well, it was quite something. Was there anything you didn't like about the job?

MM: Well, I didn't care for the pneumatic tube. It was boring because you had to stay there for all of that time and there really wasn't anything that you could do for diversion. You had to just be there. One time the Duke of Windsor came.

EC: To the Church Street Station?

MM: To Eastern Sea Frontier and he was escorted by the Admiral's Aide, and he came up to the mezzanine to the operations area. I'm probably using all the wrong terms because...

EC: No, but were you there?

MM: I was manning the tube and I had to call attention. They came up these stairs to this mezzanine and I had to stand up and call attention so the officers inside of this area would stand up. Of course, I stood up and I said attention as loud as I could, and when the Admiral's Aide who accompanied the Duke of Windsor went by me he leaned over to me and went "Boo!", because he could tell that I was a little bit nervous about the assignment. But anyway I remember that.

EC: Oh, how exciting.

MM: But that was boring. That pneumatic tube assignment was very boring. The routing was very interesting and distribution was interesting. We had a lot of exciting things happen.

EC: Oh, really. Like what?

MM: The things were happening like sub sightings.

EC: Of German subs.

MM: That's what I mean. Sometimes some convoys that we were familiar with were hit. Which was difficult. It was a very interesting time at Eastern Sea Frontier. I felt fortunate to be there because it was exciting, but also it was highly classified. My brother came to visit me. He came up from Fort Benning. He had finished his paratrooper training and he was going overseas. He came to 90 Church Street and they wouldn't let him come up to ESF. I had to come down to get him. Well, he was very much impressed by that. I don't think that before that he was that impressed. But he was when I had to come down with a special pass for him.

EC: Do you remember what your rank and pay was at that time?

MM: I was an ensign, then JG, then full lieutenant. As a matter of fact, I outranked my brother when the war was over.

EC: Oh, really.

MM: Well, he had a difficult time, but, in any event, I was a full lieutenant and he was 1st lieutenant when he got out. I went to San Diego after New York.

EC: How long were you at the Eastern Sea Frontier in New York?

MM: I was there from April of '43 until August of '45.

EC: So it was over two years.

MM: I was in New York for VJ Day. I was in Times Square.

EC: Great, we'll get to that later. Could you tell me what you did for any recreation on your time off in New York.

MM: We went to the theater a lot. You could get special rates when you were in uniform. I saw all the good shows that were in New York at the time and also went to a lot of restaurants, because we had to supply our own food--we only got \$21.00 a month for food and we got \$65.00 a month for rent. We ate in the Officers' Mess at 90 Church Street which was very cheap. The second summer twenty of us rented a house on Long Island for the summer.

EC: How interesting.

MM: Well, because New York was so hot. We didn't have air conditioning in our apartments. We had it at 90 Church Street but not in our apartments. So we rented this funny old summer house out in Lawrence, Long Island, and there was never any more than maybe a third of that number there at any one time because we stood watches. Jan Chafee's brother, the one who's the senator from R.I., had a Ford Phaeton that he had had when he was in college, and I think he was then in the service. So Jan had

that and she used to leave it at the train station in Lawrence and we would take turns picking each other up as we came in from the different watches to go back to the house.

EC: So you went there every night during the summer?

MM: That's right. I think that was the second and third summers I was there which was great because then we had a chance to have some cool weather and go to the beach. If you got out at midnight, then you'd get the train from Penn Station, the Long Island Railroad to go out to Lawrence, and sometimes you wouldn't get there until 1:30 in the morning. But we did a lot of that.

EC: Isn't that interesting. Did you ever meet John Chafee at that time?

MM: I didn't meet John then. I met him after the war at their summer house.

EC: Did you ever have an opportunity to date anybody? Was there anybody around at that time?

MM: Well, yes. The people that came in and out of the office often were convoy people and you wouldn't see them too often. When we reported there were men at 90 Church Street, but they gradually went overseas. I remember going on one of the aircraft

carriers that came into New York. We never could be on a ship at sea. They had to be in port. I met an air officer and we dated for awhile. But he was always going out to sea. We always knew where the ships were. We never could tell anybody, but we would know ourselves. So for a couple of the WAVES who were married, as soon as their husband's ship would come if they didn't get a telephone call right away the husbands were in trouble because the WAVE knew when the ship had come.

EC: Did you keep up with the war news through newsreels and newspapers at that point in time?

MM: No. We were so close to everything on our job. I do remember D-Day. I remember that so clearly because, again I was on the pneumatic tube, and when the word came through of the invasion, these men, the officers who were in this operations area, many of them had been in World War I and had been called back to active duty, remembered World War I and I was so impressed. I remember when the word came through there was silence in that area. They were sitting there looking so thoughtfully ahead and I realized then how it touched them because they had been through a war. To me, of course, I was born at the time that World War I ended. When I had my leave I used to come home and my mother and father were always glued to the radio for the news because my brother was overseas. And I think, in a sense, I almost wanted to erase it from my mind. We

were close enough to what was happening where we were. At least that's the way I felt. I can't speak for everybody else.

EC: Sure. That's very interesting. Did you write any letters home about your experiences?

MM: No, you really couldn't.

EC: Or just daily life in the WAVES?

MM: Well, I talked to my family on the telephone. When I went to San Diego I wrote to them, of course. But everything was so classified that you just shut it all out of your head. You didn't talk about anything because you were just told that you were not to.

EC: Did you experience any discrimination or harassment during this time period at 90 Church Street, or during your service at all?

MM: No. There were a few men officers, not very many, maybe one or two, I think who didn't take too kindly to women in uniform. Interestingly enough, though, there was one who was really rather very cold about the whole thing. But the night of VJ Day when we were going into Times Square (I was going with friends of mine) and we bumped into him with another male officer and they were

coming toward us and they were feeling no pain, to be perfectly frank, and he stopped and said how much he admired us and what a good job we had done.

EC: Oh, that's great!

MM: It really was and we couldn't believe it because he had been pretty negative. Most of them I found at 90 Church Street admired what we did. We were in contact with them every day. They knew we were doing our job and we were doing it well. The kind of job that we did I think women took to very well. I mean in communications, in an office. I think the men might have found it more boring. I think the women did an extremely good job at it. I really do. They were professional about it. I had a couple of friends who were assistant communications watch officers and they were very good at what they did. That was a top job.

EC: Did you ever encounter any disciplinary problems with any of the WAVES?

MM: I didn't, but there was one WAVE--we had to wear stockings all summer. We could not go bare legged. That was a uniform rule. There was one WAVE (it was so hot) she didn't wear stockings. I don't know whether she painted the line up the back of her leg with an eyebrow pencil, but anyway there was an older

male officer who reported her and her discipline was to wear cotton stockings for I don't know how long. We had a WAVE representative and she went before the representative and she said, "I'm an officer of the United States Navy and I don't think that's the proper discipline to be meted out to me. I'm an officer." And it was changed.

EC: Oh, that's good; she spoke up for herself.

MM: I think she had to be restricted to quarters or something but I could not be sure.... (END SIDE ONE) That was an example of a male officer who thought there was a difference between women officers and men officers and that's the way he handled it.

EC: Was anybody ever removed because of pregnancy?

MM: No. As I remember it, at first you couldn't date Navy officers. Then, of course, you had to leave the service if you got married. Well, they were beginning to lose so many because, naturally, the girls would meet men officers get married, but then when they became pregnant, of course, then they had to leave. There was no discrimination that I remember. We had to cover for some of the girls like on the mid-watch if they weren't feeling well. We often had to cover for them and that wasn't always easy, but I don't think there was any resentment.

EC: Did you ever serve with any black women, WAVES, because they came into the service in '44?

MM: I don't remember any because there was no black WAVE officer that I remember. Enlisted girls there could have been, but there weren't any in my office.

EC: Was there any case of homosexuality that you had heard about in the WAVES.

MM: There was in training at Northampton. I wasn't aware of it until one day I said to my roommate, "what happened to so and so? Where is she? I haven't seen her." And she said, "oh, you've got to be kidding." I said, "No why?" I think I was rather naive in those days anyway. So she told me, and I guess in training they must have weeded them out. I didn't know anything about any WAVE once they were commissioned if there were such cases...you see, we were not in such close quarters. We had our own apartments. That was the other thing. And I wasn't aware of any of it.

EC: And this wasn't a subject that was in the forefront as it is today.

MM: No, not, but evidently in officer training, it must have been at Northampton. I wasn't aware of it until after this happened and how many times it happened I don't know.

EC: That's interesting. Well, you were mentioning VJ Day and I wanted to find out about your memories and your experiences and what the spirit was in New York at this time and what you did, if you can remember that.

MM: We heard rumors of it before the declaration of VJ Day, but everybody was euphoric, of course. And then, as I said, when it happened we all spilled out into the streets. We had to report to our assigned jobs, but we all went out when we could to Times Square. We couldn't get into it. We were at the outskirts of it. We had a feeling, well, the war was over but everything was still classified. And, of course, then that's when I left and went to San Diego.

EC: So after VJ Day you went to San Diego. Did you request a transfer?

MM: Yes.

EC: Why did you do that?

MM: Well, see WAVES were not allowed to go overseas until I forgot when they changed that.

EC: In 1944, they were allowed to go to Alaska and Hawaii.

MM: It was Alaska, Bermuda, Hawaii and Newfoundland I think, but they erased them all except Hawaii, Pearl Harbor. Jan and I wanted to go to Bermuda. We were going to sign up for Bermuda. But then I came home in February and said to my family that I was going to volunteer to go to Pearl Harbor and my father said that my brother had been wounded in the Battle of the Bulge. He said "if you don't mind, we prefer that you stay in this country." He didn't say you must, but so I decided to stay in this country because I knew that they were under such a strain with my brother being wounded. So my room mate, Fran McVeigh, the one I'd gone through training with and shared an apartment with, and I both signed up for California. I signed up for San Diego and she went to Alameda.

EC: Why did you do this? Did you just want a change?

MM: I wanted a change. I did want to go to Pearl Harbor. Now Jan went to Pearl Harbor and she subsequently married the man that she met out there. I don't mean that was her particular reason, but she and I had talked about going to Bermuda. So Fran and I went to California, we went out, I'll never forget, we had

officers papers so from New York to Chicago we had very good sleeping arrangements on the train and from then on they put us on a troop train from Chicago to San Francisco. Of course, officers were supposed to have special quarters and we were not given them. We were put on a car with a mix, with enlisted and officers, which was alright. That wasn't the problem, but it was a real troop train. There was no air conditioning. They ran out of food after about two days and we were covered with soot. It was just horrendous.

EC: It sounds awful.

MM: It was awful. So when we got to San Francisco we had four days delay. Do you want to hear all of this?

EC: Sure.

MM: The first thing we did, we were supposed to go to an officers' pool to get accommodations in San Francisco, but we had heard of a small hotel through a WAVE friend of ours who was engaged to an officer out in California and she had gone out to see him. So we immediately went to the hotel and the man at the desk said, "Well, you're supposed to go through the pool to get a hotel room." We were so exhausted and dirty from the soot and all that he took pity on us and gave us a room. We were there for three days. We washed our hair, we took showers, we even did

laundry. We did everything and then we had a great time for a few days in San Francisco and then Fran went on to Alameda and I had to take the train to San Diego. Now this is a funny incident. I went down to the officer, pool at the station and I said to the registration officer, I want a bedroom on the train. I want the best accommodation you have," and he said, "Oh, look, it's going to cost you money." I mean I was on my regular ticket and it didn't cost me anything. "You don't want to spend any more money." I said, "Yes, I do. I came out on a troop train and I want good accommodations on the train." It was overnight to Los Angeles. He said, "No, you don't." So I said, "Okay." I gave in. So I went down to get on the train. Well, it was solid, as far as you could see, Marines, male. No another woman in sight. So I got on the train. They couldn't have been nicer. Most of them had gotten out of the hospital and they were, I think, on leave to go down to San Diego. Of course, it was all very well patrolled with the shore patrol on the trains. There was no problem. So I had a lower berth at the end of the car. But it was all male Marines. I was the only woman.

EC: What a unique experience.

MM: We sat for awhile talking. There was one Marine, he was about 6 feet 2 or 3, and I'm so short. Well, he just was going to be my protector. So anyway we had a great time all of us talking and then they made up the berths and everything was fine,

no problem. In the morning he said, "Now you're going to come and have breakfast with us." They had these big halls in train stations for the enlisted men to have food, but the officers were not to go there and I said, "I can't go in there with you. That's for the enlisted." "Oh, come on," he said, "they won't know the difference." Well, I went along. Nobody really cared. So I had breakfast. I always think of those movies with one woman and 10,000 men. But anyway they were awfully cute. They couldn't have been nicer and he kept saying to me, "Why don't you come up from San Diego; we'll go dancing at the Paladium," which was a great place for dancing. I didn't. Anyway, I always remember that morning having breakfast in that great big hall with all these Marines. So then I took the train down to San Diego and I reported to the Eleventh Naval District there. I was an officer courier because most of the good jobs were gone. I did some work in the code board there. One of my WAVE friends, who had been in New York, met me at the station because she was already stationed there. She made it easy for me. She took me directly to the compound in Coronado we had WAVE barracks there. It was very nice because, compared to living in Greenwich Village, where you had to get your own food, and our apartment was attractive; it was a walk-up, but it had all kinds of "wildlife." It had to be fumigated every once in awhile. It was one of these old houses. My family never realized that, I used to unpack my suitcase in the cellar when I went home just to be sure!

EC: And hope there were no cockroaches.

MM: Exactly. I had never seen one before. Well, anyway, it was very nice out in Coronado. It was entirely different.

EC: In the barracks were you lined up in beds in a row, or did you have little cubicles?

MM: No. We called it a barracks, but it was WAVE officer barracks.

EC: So that was a little different, because the enlisted gals sometimes had beds in a row or cubicles.

MM: No, I had one roommate. We had a regular room. We were in Coronado, which was across the bay from San Diego, so we stood watches. That was before the bridges were build in San Diego and so the launches took us from the WAVE barracks across the bay to our office at the Eleventh Naval District. It was interesting because I had never been in the situation that when I came out of the barracks to go to the launch when they were raising the flag I had to stop and salute as the flag was raised. I didn't have that experience in New York. We called ourselves "subway sailors" in New York.

EC: That's a cute term.

MM: That's the term we called ourselves. But it was a whole different orientation to me when I got to San Diego. I mean it was Navy in the sense that I had not experienced in New York. It was exciting. I think Eastern Sea Frontier was extremely exciting because it was a high priority, classified operation command where a lot of big things were happening. At San Diego, of course, it was, but it was another war. I was so impressed by the fact that, to me there were two wars. The Atlantic War and the Pacific War and we didn't know in New York what it was like, and they didn't know in San Diego what it was like in New York. It was entirely different.

EC: In what sense do you feel it was entirely different?

MM: Well, for one thing the enemies. It was a different enemy in that sense, you know. The Atlantic versus the Pacific, plus I was much closer to the warships in San Diego because I was delivering dispatches out on to the different piers. As a matter of fact, I remember one day I really was touched. I was going down one of the long piers and there was a destroyer that had just pulled in, and you could tell they had had hard duty, and I looked down and there was a young officer, and his sun tans were all bleached and he looked up at me and he said, "Hi, ya babe!", and he had teeth missing. He probably hadn't had much dental care. I mean he had been gone for a long time. This type of warship I had not seen in New York. It was an operational

command in New York and San Diego was where the ships were coming in and out and, also, the planes because there was the North Island Command San Diego, so it was a whole different orientation.

EC: Much closer to the war.

MM: In that sense, because it was a different operation. We were closer to the action in New York. Let me put it that way. Submarine warfare when I first went to New York was the big push. They were getting sub sightings. I was on the plain language desk the first night in New York and there were sub sightings. They came in in plain language. They didn't even code them in those days, so it was a whole different orientation.

EC: Did you work with many other WAVES in San Diego?

MM: There were a few male officers, but again it was like New York, mostly WAVES.

EC: So you went down to the piers delivering these messages. Was that basically your job?

MM: I also worked on distribution and a little bit on the code board in San Diego. But I was only there three months. I got there at the end of August and I was separated December 8. My

points accumulated, you see, so that's why I came back to New York for separation. You separated where you had gone on active duty.

EC: Oh, I see. So you were in San Diego for a relatively short time.

MM: It all comes back to me. I have a lot of funny things to tell you.

EC: Oh, good. Do tell me funny things about San Diego.

MM: I didn't tell you about when I reported in New York City and had the German Measles. That's another story. Well, I'll tell you that later. But let's finish this part. So I was there and I traveled a little bit. I didn't stand the mid watches out there, only day and evening watches, so I gained weight because we'd come in on the launches after the five to midnight watch and they would have the mess hall open and the they had a big buffet and you could make all the sandwiches you wanted and, of course, I gained weight. At least standing those watches in New York kept your weight down because it was strenuous.

EC: Did you have any chance for recreation out there?

MM: Oh, yes. I went up to Los Angeles a couple of times which I had never seen. I saw San Francisco on my way out. I had four days in San Francisco, but I went up to Los Angeles occasionally on weekends.

EC: Did you ever see your friend in Alameda?

MM: No. She was at the Air Station there. I tell you one thing. The Del Coronado Hotel let us join for \$5.00 and we used to swim at the pool there which was nice. I had friends who lived out in La Jolla and I used to go out there because San Diego was really a wide open city in those days.

EC: Was it?

MM: Yes. What bothered me, and I was young, and had come from a fairly sheltered background until I got into the service was that I noticed a lot of the young sailors in San Diego. They had bars open on the streets in the morning and these young kids would be falling down drunk. I felt sorry. I knew that they were kids and away from home. This was no different than any other service thing, but it was the first time I had seen it and I really felt sad.

EC: That's the way service life was.

MM: But, as I say again, this is what happens when you're a young person and go into the service in World War II which is something that was entirely new for someone like me.

EC: Surely. And most people then did lead sheltered lives. It was an entirely different world than it is today.

MM: Definitely. When I came home I decided I was not going to come home on a troop train. So I got to know the transportation officer, WAVE officer, who lived in my barracks. I said, "Now look, I'm going home for separation in December. Let's see what you can do for me." I got very good accommodations. I shared a bedroom with a WAVE on the Santa Fe Super Chief. Can you believe it? It is a great train. They had these ice cream sodas, you had all this wonderful food and everything, so when I came home I came that way.

EC: And you went to New York directly to separate. What did you have to do in order to separate from the service? Get discharged?

MM: I went back to my original office just to say hello to all my friends, and the commanding officer asked me if I would stay in the service. He said, "I'll get you a spot promotion to Lieutenant Commander if you'll stay because nothing had been declassified, and the troops were coming back from Europe and

everything was still classified and they needed communications officers and most of us who had gone in so early were getting out because our points had accumulated. I said, "No." I wanted to go home. I had signed up for the duration and my brother hadn't come home yet and my family were very upset because he had been badly wounded and I said, "No, I'm going home." So I just reported there just to say hello to them. Then I had to go to the separation center and I had to have a physical all over again. Once you got through the physical you were separated.

EC: I see. So it was December '45 when you were separated.

MM: That's right. And I had some accumulated leave time and when I came home my mother had given all my civilian clothes away. I just had my uniforms. I had to start from scratch. Usually you have clothes that you add to, but I didn't. So I wore my uniform and then the other thing is while you're in uniform and you had your accumulated leave you could still travel on the trains at reduced rate. So I went to visit all my friends. I had a lovely time and finally, as my leave was disappearing, my mother said to me, "Don't you think it's time you went back to work because the war is over and I think it's time."

EC: Can you tell me, Mary, if you received any medals when you were discharged?

MM: Everybody got the Victory Medal and the American Theater. That's all you got because we were based in this country, except for Pearl Harbor.

EC: I should have asked you this earlier. Do you remember what your reaction was to the death of FDR in April '45?

MM: I do remember that day. Well, he had been the only president that I had known since I was in College. I went to his second inauguration in Washington because I was at Trinity in Washington. So he was the President and when he died it just seemed like, "Where do we go from here." I think that's the way we felt at that age. And, of course, everybody in New York, everybody everywhere had been in shock about it. I don't know so much in shock as it was going to be different than what we had known as young people.

EC: Did you have any preconceived expectations when you entered the WAVES? Did you have any idea what you were getting into?

MM: No. Absolutely none, because it was so new. Let's face it, I was in the third class and I hadn't even seen anybody in uniform, except when I was interviewed at Causeway Street by a WAVE officer. It was the first time I had seen a WAVE uniform. No, I really didn't, except that I knew it was the war and it was something that was good to do and I think it was impressed on me

by my family. And, of course, my brother was so gung-ho to go and the family was very patriotic. My father was doing all this work in the Navy and he used to wear a little pin that people wore that had children in uniform and it had two stars on it, one for my brother, one for me, and whenever he took the train to Washington he loved it when people asked him what the two stars were and he could say for his son and daughter.

EC: Oh, that's great. I had never heard of that little pin.

MM: Oh, you never heard of that? Yes. There were these pins that they wore. Not everybody. But it did signify that you had somebody in the service, and you always had a flag in the window of your home, too, with the stars on it signifying that you had children or a husband in the service.

EC: Do you feel that the WAVES was a smoothly run organization?

MM: Oh, yes. I went in as the Third Class and they had only started in September, I think, at Northampton. I wasn't aware that there were any glitches anywhere along the way. It seemed to me that it was ... but then again I was a disciplined person. I think whatever happened I expected it to happen.

EC: Did the WAVES have a strong sense of esprit de corps?

MM: Oh, yes.

EC: Everybody pulling together.

MM: But you know the interesting thing about 90 Church Street or Communications was that we were a homogenous group. There's no getting away from it. We were under twenty-five and we were college graduates. We were all in communications. I've often said I wish somebody had done a history of the WAVES, pretty much you're doing this kind of thing, because where would you get a homogenous a group such as this. There were 126 of us in this office. As I remember that was the number, all under the age of twenty-five, all college graduates. In a sense privileged, because we had gone to college. And don't forget this was the end of the Depression. The Depression pretty much ended when the war came, and it was difficult for families to send their daughters to college in those days.

EC: And it wasn't as popular. People didn't go.

MM: That's right. It always struck me that that was interesting. That we were all so much alike. We were different, too, but we were very much alike in that sense.

EC: That's good. Did you feel you were challenged by the WAVES experience in your jobs?

MM: Oh, yes. As I say, It was like nothing I had ever anticipated or done. I had thought when I was interviewed at Northampton, because they interviewed you to see what branch you wanted to go in, see I spent my junior year in France and I really was fluent in French, so I thought I would like to go into Naval Intelligence and they wanted to know what languages I could offer. I said, "French." Well, everybody and his brother and sister could offer French. Let's face it, if you could speak Czechoslovakian or some such language you were somebody that they were going to put in Naval Intelligence. As a matter of fact, there was a WAVE at 90 Church Street who was bilingual in some Middle Eastern language and they did take her out of there and she went into Naval Intelligence.

EC: That is interesting.

MM: But I, also, anticipated (that was another thing when I went into the WAVES), I was very anxious to get back to France. I had a wonderful year in France and I had someone, a young man, an officer, that I was interested in. Actually he was in the Navy before I went in the Navy, and he went overseas and I thought, oh great, I'll join the Navy and go overseas and see him again. You know these are the things, the romantic ideas that you had at that age.

EC: Oh, yes. Exactly.

MM: I figured, oh good, I'll get back to France. I'll see my French family that I lived with and I'll get to see him again and, of course, that didn't happen because we did not go overseas. But those were the ideas that you had. Sort of peripheral ideas.

EC: Do you feel that the WAVES experience in the war changed or redirected your life in anyway?

MM: Oh, definitely. It made me much more independent. As I said, I had come from a sheltered background and I went to a Catholic Women's College in Washington. That was discipline. So I mean the discipline part of it was no problem to me, but it did broaden my horizons. And, yet, you would still be very much the same people. You had your own code of ethics. Mine remained the same when I went in and when I came out. And I think that was true with many of my friends.

EC: That's a fine answer. Do you feel that what women were expected to do and be changed when the war was over? Do you think that women had any other aspirations or greater aspirations?

MM: I'm thinking about the women that I knew in the service, they probably were the same when they got out. I think they went into the service because they were that type of person and when

they got out maybe they were going to continue along that vein. Of course, many of them married. I didn't marry. I went back to work and worked for a good many years. But they married and brought up families. Now how that affected them in their life I can't speak for them. But when I've see them at the reunions that we've had they all seem to be strong women in their views and in their personal sense of responsibility. I really do.

EC: That's gréat. Did you maintain any service friendships after the war?

MM: Oh, yes, definitely. Many. That's why we had that reunion.

EC: Could you tell me about the reunion that you chaired. I think you told me it was in '68, how that came about and what the purpose was.

MM: I don't know who first brought it up. Who of our group did it. They said something about, let's see it was twenty-five years. It was an Eastern Sea Frontier reunion because we decided we were there in '43 and so it was sort of a chain reaction thing. We got in touch with different ones that we knew and then they got in touch with the ones that they knew and many of them were delighted to have a chance to have a reunion. Many of them couldn't come to it, but we met and the men came, too.

EC: Where did you meet?

MM: We met at, I think it was the Park Avenue, what is it Seventh Regiment Armory. I always get the number mixed up. But anyway one of the WAVES who lived in New York had a connection with the Armory Building on Park Avenue so we had our dinner there. You see we had a chain letter kind of thing that went out to everybody that we could make connection with. You have that list there. And we had a dinner there and the men were delighted to come, the ones that had been at 90 Church Street. And we had a wonderful reunion. We really did.

EC: How long was it?

MM: Well, Friday night we had dinner and I guess we must have been there about three hours reminiscing and then Saturday noon we had a luncheon at the New York Athletic Club. We were going to have a brunch on Sunday, but some people, at that point, had to move on. I think after awhile you're talked out. What more can you say. But we had a wonderful time reminiscing and then hearing from people who couldn't make it. There are letters there in that pamphlet.

EC: Wonderful. That's great. So that was in 1968. Could you tell me where you settled after the war and what kind of work you did just to kind of wrap things up.

MM: Well, I went back to my old job at the telephone company. I was a drafting clerk in the engineering department and they had accumulated my raises while I was away and they made me a supervisor. I guess they figured my experience was worth it. We went through a euphoria after the war, let's face it, because we were Depression children and we had been regimented according to the Depression. We didn't have the freedom that young people have now. And, then, we went into the service where we were disciplined again. And now the war was over and we were released from it and we began to enjoy ourselves. And my friends, we started going skiing. I mean skiing began to be popular then and also we'd go to New York weekends and all of that and gradually, of course, people got married. I didn't. I almost did at one point. I was close to marrying, but we really don't need to go into that, I guess. But I remained friends with my married friends, of course, and continued a social life and has continued to this day because eventually, as I say, after eighteen years at the telephone company things changed, women still were not getting the positions that they do now and I had come to the level where I couldn't go any higher, and I had friends at the Providence Public Library across the street from where I worked and they said, "Well, you have a college degree, why don't you go get your masters and go to library school?" There was a dearth of professional librarians. This was 1968-69. So I did. I resigned from my job at the telephone company on my 40th birthday. I was able to do that because financially I didn't

have any responsibilities and I had lived with my father and my stepmother. So I went to Simmons and got my Masters and then I went up the ladder very quickly. I worked at Providence Public Library and then Rhode Island College and then went into the school system in Cumberland and eventually became Director of the town school library system. I found, interestingly enough, being a librarian your life experiences are very important, one of which was my WAVE service. I remember one young man who was very much interested in going into the service. I would talk to him a bit about it. He was very impressed by the fact I had been in the service. That kind of thing. I found that all the discipline that I had had helped me when I went at the age of forty to get my Master's Degree. I got it in one year which was very strenuous. It was like law school, very demanding. But I will say my Navy experience and training and being in the service, the discipline, stayed with me all my life.

EC: That's good. You would say that was the significance of your Navy experience for your life now?

MM: I would think it was one of them.

EC: And what was the other significant aspects?

MM: Well, I got to know my country. I met people from all over the United States. I had in college, but when I went to the west

coast it was a whole different kind of life style there that I had known. This was before people travelled as much as they do now. You know, it's nothing to young people now.

EC: That's right. People were very restricted.

MM: Financially they were, and you didn't have the ease of travel, of flying or anything like that. So I think anybody that's been in the service has that feeling. That their wartime experience had opened up such horizons for them. I really do think so.

EC: That's great. Do you have anything else you want to add?

MM: I was going to tell you my experience with the German Measles.

EC: Oh, yes, do.

MM: When you're in the training school, close quarters, there are these germs, these childhood diseases that get passed around, and so I reported to 90 Church Street and the first day they assigned up to the different watches and I was assigned to the mid-watch. We were living at the Henry Hudson Hotel. The Navy had taken that over on 59th Street and we all went there while we found quarters, because we had to find our own quarters. And so

Fran McVeigh and Betty McPhail, my two roommates from training, and I shared a room at the Henry Hudson Hotel. Well, I was assigned the mid-watch the first night and the other two got the day watch. So I reported scared to death. I thought, what am I doing? I had no idea what was going on. So I reported and I went in and I was trained by this Ensign Laffy. I always wonder what happened to him. He smoked big cigars. And he trained me on the plain language desk. They didn't encode any of these sub sightings. And so he sat down for an hour to train me on routing this thing and then he left me. I was to pay the least not too sure of myself. I think I sat there for nine hours and I learned the routing. So I went back to the hotel and my two roommates were going on the day watch and the next night I was assigned to the famous pneumatic tube. I didn't feel very well, but I was on that for nine hours and I went back to the hotel and I really didn't feel well at all. I remember saying to myself, how long is this war going to last? I got up in the middle of the day and I went and looked at myself in the mirror and I was all puffy, red and blotchy. So my roommates came back and I said, "I don't feel good." They said, "you better go report to the duty doctor." You couldn't not report to duty unless you had a broken leg practically. So I went down and I reported and there were still male officers in the office. They hadn't been released for sea duty and the watch officer was there. He was married and had a couple of small kids and I said, "I don't feel very well. I think I better see the duty doctor. So I went up. The duty

doctor looked at me, and said the famous expression was "Let me see your chest" because they all wanted to know what you were blossoming with. He said, "You've got the German Measles." I said, "What am I going to do? I've got two roommates and I'm living in a hotel." He said, "Well, the contagioun period's over. If they're going to get it, they're going to get it. Just go back there until it passes and then you'll be alright." So I went back down to the duty officer and said I've got German Measles. Of course, they all flew to the four quarters of the office because they had kids at home. So I went back to the hotel and my roommates were there and I wasn't very popular. They immediately went out looking for an apartment. So I thought, what am I going to do? (I didn't dare call for room service) so I called my mother. I'm four days away from home. I said, I've got the German Measles." She said, "What do you want me to do about it?" I said, "I don't know." She said, "I can come down and put you in the hospital." (My father had been at Flower and Fifth Avenue Hospital; he had a heart attack two years before.) So she came down and I said, "I think I have to go to a Navy hospital." I didn't know any of this protocol. She said, "Do something about it." I called. It was a different duty doctor and he said, "I'll send somebody over for you and put you in Brooklyn Naval Hospital." I said, "okay." My mother sat up with me and I got all dressed up in my uniform and I sat there and about 10:00 at night there was a knock at the door and there was a Navy nurse and two stretcher bearers. They had a big

stretcher and he said, "Ensign Maguire." I said, "yes." "They said you were a stretcher case." I said, "No, I've got the German Measles." Anyway they put me on the stretcher. They took me down the freight elevator into the lobby of the Henry Hudson Hotel and out the service entrance. So we got on this long sleek Navy ambulance. A real nice nurse said, "Do you smoke?" I did at that time and she said, "Well, you'd better have a cigarette now. They won't let you have one in the hospital." I said, "Okay," so we sat whistling over Brooklyn Bridge smoking cigarettes in this ambulance. We got to the hospital. Again, it's about midnight. (I'm always arriving around midnight.) Mind you, this is the 3rd class out of Northampton. They didn't know what to do with WAVES. They hadn't had any. So anyway they said, "Well, we're going to put you up in the admiral's suite because there's no admiral there this weekend, so we'll put you in there." They had a ward for the enlisted girls, but, you see, I was an officer so the nurse went up with me and she said, "You can use the head because nobody's going to be in here." It was connecting to another room and then they brought me male pajamas because they didn't have any clothes for women. She said, "You get washed up." I went in and then I got back in the bed and in the morning the duty doctor came and he was the best looking lieutenant commander doctor and he came with a group of other doctors and looked at me and he said, "You've got the German Measles." I said, "yes, I know." He said, "Did you use the head last night?" I said, "Yes." (Of course, I didn't want to bag

the nurse.) He said, "You've got a contagious disease. You shouldn't be using that." So they sent a decontamination squad in to decontaminate the head and they took me down to the bottom of the hospital down to where the ward was and there was a private room off of it for the officers. They put me in there and came mealtime they'd all get up and go get their meals on a tray and I got up to go with them and the nurse said, "You can't do that. You're an officer. We'll get it for you." That's when I began to realize the difference. (It felt strange) So anyway I was there; I'd be there yet until I finally spoke up after four days and said, "I think I'm alright now." The rash is gone and so they dismissed me. I went out on the street at Brooklyn Naval Yard. There wasn't anybody around. I had to flag a cab and I got in the cab and went back to Ninety Church Street. Well, they practically didn't remember me. I had been gone for four days. Everybody else had been trained. They all knew what they were doing. They finally said to me, "What's your name." Anyway I finally did get back into the swing of it. But that was my introduction to Ninety Church Street!

EC: What an introduction! Just one more question before we break. Did you find any tension at all between the enlisted rates that you had any contact with, between enlisted WAVES and the officers?

MM: We had very few. We were all officers because of its being so highly classified; that one friend of mine, the one that was sworn in with me and another girl. I don't think they were on the mid-watches. They were on the day watches. No, there was no feeling. The enlisted men, we all got along very well. We weren't supposed to date any enlisted, but a couple of the girl officers did.

EC: Oh, they did?

MM: Well, it was New York City. There was a lot that you could get away with that you couldn't on a base. Actually the enlisted men and the WAVES officers got along very well. They had a great deal of respect for us and we did for them. I never saw any feeling of resentment at all on their part. They were yeomen. There was a chief when we first arrived and he'd been in the service for many years and he really was impressed by the WAVES. He thought it was great and he was a great help to us, even introducing us to Navy coffee which really kept you awake!

EC: Mary, I want to thank you for participating in the Naval War College oral history project on the WAVES in World War II.

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