NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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LOUISE A. PLATT WRIGHT

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THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

INTERVIEWEE: LOUISE A. PLATT WRIGHT

INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

DATE: MAY 10, 1996 and JUNE 25, 1996

May 10, 1996

C: This is the first Oral History interview with Louiseannette Platt Wright. Mrs. Wright joined the WAVES in 1943 and we're recording her reminiscences for the WAVES in World War II Oral History Project. My name is Evelyn Cherpak. I'm the curator of the Naval Historical Collection at the Naval War College. Today's date is May 10, 1996, and the interview is being conducted in Mahan Hall.

I'm very pleased, Louiseannette, that you were able to come today from Connecticut to conduct this interview on your service in the WAVES and your naval career post 1949, which was quite extensive and interesting. I would like to begin the interview by asking you when and where you were born?

W: I was born in Providence, Rhode Island, June 30, 1922.

C: You're a native Rhode Islander then, I didn't realize that.

That's great, because my project is focusing on Rhode Island

women who joined the WAVES in the war. What did your father do

for a living?

W: He had been an accountant and worked in the General
Treasurer's Office in the State House until 1933. With the change
of political parties in office in Rhode Island, we went to Maine,
where we had a summer cottage, to live and raise chickens. This
did not turn out to be profitable. After a year and a half we
returned to Rhode Island. We were all in the depths of the
Depression and accountants just weren't being hired. Prohibition
had been repealed and running a saloon seemed the way to go.
After several attempts to obtain a liquor license, it became
obvious that he would not be able to obtain a license in his own
name because of his political connections. He took in a partner
and got a license. He was in business about ten years. Most of
the time it was a marginal operation until after our country
entered World War II, after which time the economy took off and
with it the saloon business.

C: What did you mother do for a living?

W: She had been a teacher and she taught for eight years before she married and then she never taught afterwards because, in those days, that was the way things were.

- C: Exactly. Women didn't work after they were married and, in some cases, they weren't allowed to work after they were married.
- W: Yes, especially during the Depression.
- C: Did you have any brothers or sisters?
- W: I have a twin brother, John, and a kid brother, Ronalds, Jr., who is twenty months younger than we, so the three of us really grew up together.
- C: Where did you go to elementary school and high school?
- W: In Providence. The high school was Hope High School. Montague Street School, John Howland Elementary School. Deerfield, Maine grammar school and first year of high school. We returned to Nathan Bishop, Jr. High School in Providence.
- C: Did you decide to go to college after high school?
- W: That was a foregone conclusion from the time I was born. My mother was set on the fact that her children would get an education. The money was very tough, and it didn't help that there were twins, but Rhode Island State College was the answer, because there was no tuition at that time.

C: Now was that in Providence?

W: Kingston, Rhode Island.

C: That was the forerunner of URI today. When did you enroll in Rhode Island State College?

W: In 1939; it was just after the start of the war in Europe.

C: What did you major in there?

W: Biology.

C: Did you have any intention of using it in any occupation after you graduated?

W: I was really thinking of becoming a doctor, but as I went through college I realized that the money wouldn't be available for anything like that, and I was majoring in extracurricular activities, particularly sports.

C: What was your interest in sports?

W: Rhode Island State College at that time was the only college in New England that had varsity sports for women, and at that time most games were played against colleges from New York, New

Jersey, and Philadelphia because of the lack of competition in New England. Field hockey, basketball, and tennis were the varsity sports, so I became members of those teams.

C: That's impressive. You were very athletic then?

W: We had spent our summers in Maine from the time we were small children, on a lake where we went swimming and tennis and all the rest of it.

C: So you carried through with that in college. Well, that's very interesting that URI sponsored varsity sports for women. When did you graduate from Rhode Island State College?

W: In January 1943.

C: Was that a little earlier then?

W: They started an accelerated program the summer before (1942). We completed the first semester of our last year in the summer and the second semester in January.

C: Did your family have any Navy connections? Was anybody in the Navy?

W: A cousin of my mother had been a radioman in World War I on yachts sailing around Rhode Island and New London, Connecticut.

My father was a veteran of the AEF in France, 26th Yankee

Division and 103rd Field Artillery.

C: How did you hear about the WAVES? Do you remember how you first heard about them?

W: The publicity started out in the newspapers. The WACS had already started and most of their people were photographed peeling potatoes which didn't really get my attention.

C: So you decided on the Navy instead of the Army?

W: When the WAVES were started, I liked everything I saw about them. At the time, they also implied there wouldn't be any KP for their women, which, of course, they had to go back on almost immediately because there was no way out of it.

C: When did you decide to join the WAVES?

W: Probably in the fall of 1942 because I was near graduation time. Curtiss-Wright (an aircraft company) had been recruiting among the junior and senior women in the science curriculum at R.I. State College, offering a year's training at either Renssalaer or Cornell for women in our section of the country,

before going to work for that company. I was among several at R.I. interviewed and who were tendered a formal offer. I turned it down having decided I would rather be a part of the military than be skirting along the edges. Brother John was already a member of the Enlisted Reserve Corps and had been deferred until graduation. Brother Ronalds, who started in college two years after we did, had just gone into Advanced Corps of the ROTC. It was inevitable that they would be in the Army, and I wanted to go into the Navy.

C: That's interesting. Did any of your friends join? Any of your college friends?

W: A couple of my sorority sisters did go into the Army in dietetics and things of that nature that they had majored in in college.

C: But nobody in the Navy?

W: No one in the Navy that I knew of at that time. I met a couple of my friends around Rhode Island, one of whom had told me that she was very interested, but was unable to pass the physical; but, for the most part, there was a very strong current from families against women going in.

C: How did your parents feel about your joining?

W: Well, I had a split decision on that one. My father thought it would be great if I went in the Army. The Navy didn't interest him. My mother thought it would be great if I did anything because she hadn't seen any signs of what was going to happen after college. When I was home for the Christmas break just before graduating, there was a newspaper article that stated the recruiting station in Providence would be recruiting for the WAVES and so I mentioned to my mother that I would probably go down to see what they had to say about it. The next morning, at the crack of dawn, my mother was shaking the foot of the bed, saying, "I thought you were going to the recruiting station." I said," Yes, but I'm not in any particular rush this morning." I got there about 11 o'clock and, needless to say, the left hand didn't know what the right hand was doing. They didn't know anything about this ad that had been in the newspaper. They didn't know what to do with me, so they tested my eyesight in the front of the room. My twin brother, who had accompanied me to the recruiting station, doubled up laughing in the back of the room because he thought this was all pretty strange -- he had to go into the armed forces, but I didn't.

C: It sounds kind of strange.

W: Shortly after that I read in the newspaper that the WAVES would all be processed through the Naval Office of Procurement in Boston. That's how they would do the recruiting processing for the Navy enlisted women, in Boston.

C: So did you have to go to Boston after that?

W: Yes, right after I finished college, I went to Boston and started the process.

C: That was in January of '43. Do you remember what the process was in Boston?

W: There were physical examinations and aptitude and intelligence testing. Until the time I was being processed, the WAVE recruits were sent directly to the schools for specialized training—yeomen at Stillwater, Oklahoma (University of Oklahoma), and radiomen training at Madison, Wisconsin (University of Wisconsin), etc. Originally, I think they intended to take in about 10,000, but then they realized they needed and could train more than that. So, they established the boot school at Hunter College. Of those who completed boot training, some would be sent to the specialized school and the rest directly to activities where they could strike for rates by on-the-job training. I was sworn in 15 February 1943 in Boston, and shortly after that the first regiment arrived at U.S. Naval Training Station, Bronx, NY (Hunter).

C: Yes. You were very early because they started the boot school at Hunter in February '43. How long was the time gap between your enlistment in Boston and your reporting to Hunter, do you remember?

W: I was sworn in 15 February '43 and left for Hunter 5 March '43. Before the swearing in I had a small problem to resolve.

Because I was under 21 years of age, I had to have parental permission to enlist. While I wanted officer training, the New England quotas for officers were filled, and to get into the Navy I had to go the enlisted route. My father wanted me to go into the Army, but they weren't recruiting anyone under 21. After having my brother and me in and out of the house at all hours for the first time in four years, my father, looking for some peace and quiet, said, "Where's that paper? I'll sign it."

When I went to Boston for swearing in, they had just started recruiting female marines. I could have applied for marine officer training, an idea I toyed with briefly. Then remembering my father's antipathy for the Marine Corps, I went ahead with my enlistment in the Navy.

C: He would be opposed to the Marines?

W: He thought the Marines had received more publicity than they deserved during World War I when he had been fighting in France as a member of the AEF.

C: So he finally relented and signed your permission to go into the Navy.

W: Yes. We went to the railroad station to see my brother off for Fort Devens the week before, at which point my father said, "That's one down and one to go." Then on the fifth of March it was my turn.

C: That's cute. Well, you arrived in Hunter and you said you were in the second regiment going in. Do you remember what your impression was of your living arrangements there?

Total confusion, starting with the fact that two railroad cars full of recruits from Boston and Providence arrived in New York City, where we were supposed to be met and transferred to the Bronx in special subway cars. It was late on a Friday afternoon, rush hour, no special cars. The WAVE officers who met us pushed us into subway cars already jammed full of people and yelling at us to get off at a certain station (I've forgotten which one). Some got off at what later turned out to be the right station; others didn't, but presumably eventually arrived at Hunter. An armory in the area was used for processing. (It was also used later for entertainment purposes. Big bands such as Jimmy Dorsey's played there as they did in many other areas for the military.) Because of the hour they must have also taken us to the mess hall for dinner, but I have no recollection of that. It was probably crowded out of my mind by our landing at the apartment buildings taken over by the Navy. Hunter was a commuter college and had no dormitories. Years later in the Judge Advocate General's office I met a captain who had been a fresh caught LT(jg) assigned to Hunter as First Lieutenant, one of whose first tasks was to evict the tenants from the apartment houses. Some refused to leave but changed their minds when whistles were blown at 6 AM throughout the buildings announcing reveille for the WAVES.

C: And you were living there.

W: I wasn't aware of this at the time. I think it was all resolved in the two weeks before my own arrival.

C: How many girls did you live with in your room at Hunter?

W: These were apartments. The one I lived in had a living room, dining room, bedroom and bath. The dining room was used as a smoking room during certain hours for the WAVES living at that end of the building. Talk about secondary smoke! There was no door between the dining room and living room—where there were three double—deck bunks and nothing else. There were no chairs or chests of drawers. The closets had no hangers. The bedroom had two double—deck bunks. To sit anywhere it had to be on the bunks. When WAVES were in the dining (smoking) room, they sat on the floor. There were ashtrays there but nothing else. There were ten of us in the apartment and one bathroom. On our arrival, late on the Friday, we were told there would be a Captain's inspection

Saturday morning. The bathroom was a mess with rust stains in the tub and sink. We decided that surely they didn't expect us to clean it, so we left it just as it was. Saturday morning, as instructed, those of us in the living room lined up an hour before the expected arrival. The WAVES in the bedroom thought they would be able to hear the arrival and sat on the lower bunks writing letters. The Captain was in their doorway before they knew it. In attempting to rise they banged their heads on the upper bunks, scattering the writing materials.

C: What happened after the Captain's inspection.

W: We were written up. I still remember the shocked voices as the inspection party surveyed the mess. There wasn't an awful lot they could do to us since we didn't have liberty anyway. We had to clean up the mess, of course.

C: Closets?

W: There were closets, no hangers. We were lucky in having the dining room as a place to put our luggage. We were able to use the sink there and to hang up stockings, etc. I don't remember how we got things to dry. The lisle stockings would take a couple of days to dry. Everybody was in the same boat, of course.

C: They must have provided you with hangers later for your uniforms?

W: Not while I was there.

C: Oh really, you just had pegs or something?

W: My mind goes blank on some of these things. We had to have gotten them from somewhere, but I'm sure the Navy didn't provide them. They had a Navy Exchange that we could eventually go to and I suppose we picked up stuff there.

C: Do you remember what kind of classes you took there?

W: Yes, they had ship and aircraft identification and Naval organization, pretty much the same as the midshipmen's school.

C: I got the impression it was kind of the same thing, Navy protocol and history.

W: Yes, that's right.

C: Were you tested?

W: I'm sure we were, but I don't think they ever gave us the results.

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

W: Well, for the first few days I think I was sending SOS's home to get me out of this place.

C: Why did you send the SOS's home? What didn't you like about it?

W: This was all total confusion. The first regiment and of course we only saw them at a distance because they were at different buildings anyway. They were not in uniform yet, they were still wearing their civilian clothes. By that time their clothes looked pretty scrounge. You didn't bring much with you expecting you wouldn't be wearing civilian clothes. I had a friend who was another specialist in Washington with me who had come from Seattle. And after the horror of the five day trip for the west coast gals to get to Hunter, they were the first to arrive, fortunately for us, because they were immediately put on KP. She was wearing her lovely Easter suit; and by the time she finished two weeks KP and got off KP, there wasn't anything left of the suit.

C: I can imagine. Did you get uniforms immediately?

W: No, it took almost two weeks, as I recall. Actually, when you consider what they were going through, they did a very good job

on uniforms, because it was being done by civilian department stores who were selling the uniforms. They had the people there to do the fitting. The Navy started Hunter by taking a whole class from Midshipmen's School at Northampton and sending them all to NYC to start the school.

C: Right, they did.

W: And you know they were pretty fresh caught, too.

C: Right, so everybody was new.

W: Everybody was new and everything was new for everybody.

C: Yes. Getting this organized was something. Do you remember what your daily regime was like? Getting up you mentioned at six o'clock.

W: Yes, six o'clock and we had to march down to the chow hall.
You see that was on the college campus there. The apartment
houses were on a hill overlooking the campus.

C: What did you think of the food? Was it good?

W: You know it was pretty good. It wasn't gourmet certainly, but there was plenty of it. That was one of the problems. I never had any trouble because I was a fast eater, but a lot of my friends never had a full meal because we had twenty minutes to get into the hall, eat, scrape off trays, and get out of the hall. You see all this was done on time. My recollection was, but it could be wrong as so many things have turned out in recent years, that there were 2,000 in each regiment which would have been 4,000 on the campus plus ship's company. I know that it took them three hours to run two regiments through the mess hall for each meal. Marching all these platoons around--this was before computers, of course, and they had to work it out. I can't imagine what it must have taken to work it out so that the platoons weren't piling up from place to place. You know it was really something. But as I recall, for instance, in the morning we were in there for breakfast around eight o'clock. I can always remember coming out, and if we weren't forming up by the time that the colors began, others would be forming up. It was interesting, we weren't supposed to take any food out of the mess hall. Because of the fact that some of the poor kids never got a full meal, you would see their hands. You know this stands out like a sore thumb on a blue uniform. Nobody ever said anything because they were aware of all the problems involved.

C: Oh, yes, messing 4,000 people would have been incredible.

W: And the worse part of it was something that happened to others but didn't happen to me. All the furniture was just thrown

in I'm sure when they were setting this up. They had tables that had little seats on pivots that swung out to sit on (attached to the table—no legs), and the first group went to sit down at the table. Unfortunately, they sat down on one side, and the table went over on them with the food all over the place. So after that they had monitors who made sure that everybody was standing on both sides and sat at the same time until they could get the tables anchored to the floor.

C: Isn't that something.

W: This is all part of this complete and total confusion.

C: Of trying to organize this. Did you have any free time during the day?

W: No, my time was spent getting to classes, getting to meals because, even if you only had a small period of time between the classes and the meal, they had to get you out of there. We had to go back to our buildings, and then come back out, reform and go back, and so it was constant marching to and fro for all of us.

C: Did you like the marching and drilling?

W: I enjoyed that. As a matter of fact, my company was so good at it that on the first inspection after we were in uniforms we

were declared the best company for marching. This was on a Saturday and then on Sunday we were marching up and down in the Bronx in a mini parade for the local inhabitants. The officers accompanying us were walking on the sidewalk, and they were looking at the shop windows, pretending they weren't with us. This went on for about three hours and we never marched well again. After that, the companies that won the competitions went to baseball games and things like that.

C: Rather than more marching. Your prize was a parade.

W: When we went there we were told to buy shoes. These shoes for years all came out of the civilian sources. They were lace-up Oxfords, the ugliest looking shoes ever. We were told to bring a couple of pairs with us before we left home and to get them plenty large because they were going to expand. Well, they weren't kidding because my feet had expanded to another size in the six weeks I was at Hunter.

C: Oh, for heavens sake, because of all the marching and drilling.

W: Oh, yes.

C: Did you have the regimental reviews on Saturday morning?

W: Yes. As a matter of fact, there was a big boulevard that was near the reservoir. I can remember one day, it was still cold, it was March but it was still cold. Fiorello La Guardia was the mayor of New York at that time and he was coming up for the review. He was detained, and we were standing there stamping our feet for almost an hour before he showed up. Our knees were like icicles.

C: Oh no, that must have been awful! Did you like the Navy uniform?

W: Oh yes. I always loved the Navy uniform; it was just right.

It would expand to a degree if necessary.

C: Did you ever get any time off, any leave during your basic training period?

W: After we were in uniform, we had eight hours (noon to 8 PM) on either Saturday or Sunday on the three weekends before we left Hunter. My parents came to NY for one of those periods and took me to dinner. A boyfriend who was an ensign in the Coast Guard, whom I had known in college, came from Boston for another time off. One the last liberty I went to White Plains, NY by train. A friend from my summers in Maine was in the hospital there with a new baby. Her husband and their three-year-old boy took me to the hospital to visit and then to dinner before I returned to NYC.

As for time off, when I say we didn't have any time by ourselves, we really didn't. But, for instance, they would march us to campus on weekends, and we would eventually get to the navy exchange, thank God, because we needed to get all these things that we had never known that we would need. In the navy exchange, I ran into the sister of one of my college roommates who was an officer who had gone to Sargent College in Boston and was a company commander. She wasn't in my building, but my company commander had roomed with her at Northampton. So as a result of the two of us meeting, she arranged for me to come down and see her on a Sunday. Her building was a few buildings down from where I was, on a special pass; it was all very special. I had never felt more naked in my life than when I went out all alone without all those other 29 or 30 people with me, just to go to her building, where she filled me up with chocolates, and we discussed everything. Now at that time it was becoming a question of, where were we going to be sent and all of that? This was part of the testing process, I'm sure. Now one of the things that came up was they were going to have to have Specialists (S) because they needed them for Hunter for one thing. The officers were doing a lot of the things that really should have been done by enlisted. They were also going to need them in Washington to manage the barracks. They downplayed that one. I thought this was a good idea, I'd get to live in New York, and so I wanted to apply. But they had an age limit; you had to be at least 25 and I was 20, and it didn't sit too well. However, I went for an

interview and, because of the conversation with my college roommate's sister and her connection with my company commander, I got the rating despite the fact that I was 20 years old.

C: That's great.

W: Oh yes. I did go for an interview for a hospital corps because I figured with my biology degree and I had a minor in bacteriology, that might help. The gentlemen interviewing said, "Are you willing to handle bedpans?" And I said, "no" and that did it with that conversation.

C: So, your specialist would have been in an administrative billet. Is that correct?

W: Yes. So I got it and we were suppose to be rated when we left Hunter, but they hadn't come through with the paperwork, which we could understand. Of course, when I found out I was going to Washington, I wasn't too pleased about that, but to Washington we went.

C: Could I double back before we get into that and ask you just a few more questions about Hunter. Did you participate in any extracurricular activities there? Some of the gals worked on newspapers and were in singing platoon.

W: Yes, that's about what they had. They had a swimming pool at the college and I swam there a few times because I was into swimming at that time. But really there was practically no time.

C: For that kind of thing.

W: Yes.

C: Did you feel that at the end of the training that the WAVES company you were in or platoon you were in, did you feel that they were a cohesive group and that there was a great deal of camaraderie?

W: Very much so. I think they did a wonderful job considering all the problems that they had. We were suppose to be there for two months; but, right after we arrived, they said it was only going to be six weeks because they wanted to get us out and on the road, so that kind of cut short on some of these things.

C: But anyway you were selected for a specialist rate once you finished Hunter?

W: Yes.

C: And you sent off to Washington.

The first Waves in Washington were in a hotel, WAVE Quarters A on 12th Street. Then WAVE Quarters B and C were opened in West Potomac Park and Arlington Farms, respectively. These were two-story buildings named after the states that, I think, were originally intended for civilian women brought into the D.C. area to work in government. With an increasing number of WAVES coming into the area, the Navy took over Louisiana Hall, which was designated WAVE Quarters C. Three of the SP(S) 3c, Clem Neighbors, Aspasia Phoutrides, and I were detailed to "C", Louisiana Hall. At first there were three officers there, one of whom, LT LeMay, was Officer in Charge. Two more officers were assigned at a later date. The first group of WAVES there occupied half of the hall--the wings to the right of the entrance. About four weeks later, the wings of the other half were occupied by the woman Marines from Hunter who had trained there until their own facilities were set up. They were at "C" while their barracks were being built at Henderson Hall near BuPers. They had their own Sergeants in Charge. They had no officers there. A Marine Major (male) Smith was in charge from a distance. Once a week he would march them from work through Arlington Cemetery to "C" and inspect their quarters. When WAVE Quarters D was established in the summer of 1943, Aspasia and I were sent there to help get it started. These were real barracks -- rows of double-deck bunks and one large head area at the far end. Some of the buildings were still under construction, but there was a mess hall in operation. I was in charge of the mail room, which had a real problem. There were hundreds of WAVES at "D" who had been assigned to barracks as they arrived with no consideration given to which of three watches they were working around the clock. It was obvious they would have to be assigned according to which watch they were working. Wholesale reassignments were made. In the meantime, they had already informed their many correspondents of their new address, which included barracks and bunk number identification, all of which had to be changed on their incoming mail. That was where my crew and I came in. There was much more letter writing in those wartime days, and I think we were all fascinated by our writing "free" in place of the stamp on the envelope.

C: Were you actually living in the barracks?

W: Yes. They had a ship's company barracks. I went to take a shower one morning and returned to find my rayon stockings had been stolen from my locker. I wasn't pleased about anything at "D", and I was working outside my rate, which would be damaging to my career. Having kept in touch with friends at "C", I had heard they were taking over sections of Maine and Nebraska Halls. I had a talk with LT LeMay at "C", and as she was short of SP(S)'s, she requested that I be returned. At my last interview with LT Walsh at "D", she said that she couldn't understand how anyone as young as I could be so inflexible. Free at last, I returned to "C" and took over the group at Maine Hall—about 200 WAVES. There was a civilian woman in charge of the hall and the

civilians who lived there, with whom I could coordinate on any problems. Since the physical areas occupied by each group were separated by the entrance and a reception area with a desk where mail was distributed to boxes, there were no problems that I can recall. One of the officers from "C" would come to Maine each day to read the log. The rooms were small but set up for one person with a cot-type bed, dresser, easy chair, desk and closet--very decent living conditions for enlisted personnel. I understand that after I left for Midshipman School, the Navy took out the partitions between every two rooms and put in two double-deck bunks. This was not as good as the original plan, but still better than barracks. The head facilities were along the main corridors and either side of the entrance from which the wings were extended. There was a civilian cafeteria at Arlington Farms where we paid for our meals. All the enlisted WAVES there were on subsistence allowance of \$45 a month when I arrived, but it was increased to \$54 during my stay in DC. Officers received only \$21 a month for subsistence. This was one time when it paid to be enlisted.

C: Was that for your rations?

W: Yes.

C: Did you stand watches there?

W: Yes. There were twenty-four hour watches maintained, but by the time I took over Maine Hall, there were seamen to stand the watches which I supervised. In addition to assisting and counseling the WAVES, I conducted room inspections during the weekdays, and at 2 AM the seaman on watch made bed checks on the rooms in the wings that I assigned at the last minute. At 2 AM on Sunday mornings I assisted in bed checks on all the rooms. They had locks on the doors, but I had a master key. The bed checks were started because a curfew was imposed on all enlisted personnel in the DC metropolitan area between the hours of 2 and 6 AM. I don't remember if the officers were included, probably not. I think it was started while I was at "D" because I don't remember bed checks while I was standing watches at Louisiana Hall. When the women Marines landed in Washington and at "C", they were an instant smash hit on the dating scene. My observations while I stood night watches were that a substantial number of them partied all night and came back to "C" to shower and change uniforms before going to work. This had to have had an adverse impact on their job performances. I know that their activities were the subject of many discussions among the officers, and it may have triggered the imposition of the curfew. On the other hand, a curfew may have been working its way through channels before the woman Marines ever arrived in Washington. We can give them the benefit of the doubt.

C: Oh, dear. Did you ever run into any discipline problems when you were at the Maine Hall?

W: Not really. We had malingerers. Some WAVES might be sick for a day or two. Others might decide that they were tired for a day or so. The seamen on watch would have to make toast and tea for them. That enraged me because I could distinguish between the malingerers and others. A woman Navy doctor held sick call in the afternoon at Louisiana Hall. Anyone not at work and presumably sick had to attend. The doctor never made an issue of the malingering.

C: That's interesting. I hadn't heard of that. But really no discipline problems other than malingerers?

W: You had the usual complainers but the numbers were quite small. The only thing I can remember that could have been a discipline problem involved two of the malingerers—who were always ill on the same days. One Saturday night, really Sunday morning, during bed check, the seaman and I found them asleep together naked on the same cot. At the direction of LT LeMay, I reported the circumstances to the doctor. I heard nothing further about it.

C: Now that wasn't a problem that was really--in those days?

W: Not generally in those days. There were rumors from time to time. Those two did give me one uneasy moment. I had a corner room at the end of one wing, and they had the two rooms next to mine along the wing. I fell ill during a bed check, and the seaman assisting me helped me to my room following a trip to the head. After she left, I hadn't locked the door, and the two of them came in and sat on my bed, in which I was lying naked. The seaman leaving the wing heard a noise, looked back, and saw the two going into my room. She returned and got them out of my room.

C: Did you have any time off yourself during this time frame in Washington?

W: There was a Navy shuttle bus driven by a motor machinist mate that made the rounds from Arlington Farms to WAVE Quarters "B", "A" into the downtown area from 6 PM to 12 PM every day. We did some traveling around Washington and to the Luray Caverns in Virginia. I spent a weekend in NYC to date a college friend who was an ensign in the Navy. I took a week's leave in the fall for a trip to Maine and had two or three weekends in Providence during the summer. One of those involved my friend Aspasia while we were at WAVE Quarters "D". She had been directed by her parents in Seattle to go to Newport to find out why her brother, who had been a student at MIT, was then at boot school in Newport. To help out I suggested that we go to my home in Providence for the weekend, and she could go to Newport from

there. I had to practically drag her out of the barracks to get to the train on time. She was always very well groomed, and, because of this, often late. On the train she was applying nail polish, the windows were open, and air current from a passing train took her hat. She grabbed for it and got nail polish all over the white crown. The next morning we had to take care of the hat before she could go to Newport. My brother Ronalds had been called into service by then and was home for the weekend. He made two or three trips to a drugstore a few blocks away to retrieve polish remover, bleaches, ink eradicator—anything we could think of. And eventually, by a miracle, the hat was presentable, and she took off for Newport. By 2 PM on Sunday she wasn't back. I packed her bag, and we drove to the station. Fortunately we saw her hanging out of the window of a bus load of sailors just as we arrived at the station.

C: Did they recommend you for midshipmen's school?

W: Yes.

C: Oh, they did. So how long were you in Washington?

W: I left towards the end of November as I recall. I had just made second class. I made second class in October. After we made second class, we got our second class crows on our arm. We went down to a football game at Annapolis and we took the bus down.

The football tickets were available. It was interesting because during wartime we couldn't get into the school property. They had guards on all the gates. If you had friend or a member of the family or somebody like that there, you could arrange to have them meet you and then they could take you through but otherwise you couldn't. So actually all we saw of the place was the football field. But anyway we went down there and it was in November and I remember it was very cold but we wouldn't put our coats on because we didn't want to cover up our second class crows. We were cold.

C: But you showed off your rating.

W: Yes.

C: When did you finally enroll in the midshipmen school in Northampton?

W: It was in November, and those of us who were ex-enlisted went back to apprentice seamen and then we were appointed midshipmen towards the end of December. You know at that point we changed our hats.

C: So you were there for about eight weeks in Northampton?

W: Yes, it's two months in the midshipmen school and two months in communications school.

C: Okay, well let's go back to your transitioning into the officer ranks. You said you were recommended by your superiors and was it just on that basis alone?

W: You applied for it and they made their recommendation. The group was very amenable to it at WAVE Quarters "C", in contrast to WAVE Quarters "D". Fortunately I wasn't at "D". Now it was after you had been six months was the minimum you had to be six months enlisted before you could apply, and I applied in September. I had a physical and examinations. But the interesting thing about that is that I knew early on that I was getting it. The WAVE yeoman who was typing up my orders was living in Maine Hall, and she was so delighted when she saw this, she called me. That was interesting because I had never heard officially until probably a week before I left and yet I knew that I was going.

C: Did you want to transition into the officers corps?

W: Oh, yes.

C: Was that your goal when you went in?

- W: Oh, yes. Especially when comparing the status of the enlisted versus the status of the officers. There wasn't any question.
- C: And you had the qualifications?
- W: Yes, I had the qualifications.
- C: Did you find other women who were in the enlisted rates who were college grads as well?
- W: Oh, yes. There were a lot of them at that time and for the same reason--lack of quotas for officer training. My friend Aspasia was a graduate of the University of Washington. After she was transferred from WAVE Quarters "D" to Seattle to set up barracks there, she was finally recommended for Midshipmen's School and became an ensign from one of the last classes at Northampton.
- C: Well, then you transitioned up to Northampton to the midshipmen's school. Can you give me your impressions of that experience, the eight weeks there?
- W: I loved it! Of course, in the first place, I was one of the lucky half. They alternated: The classes coming in would stay either at the hotel or on the campus. And if you stayed at the hotel, you had it made--I was at the hotel--because that's where

you had your meals as well as everything else. And the only marching you did was from there to class and back, whereas the ones who were on the campus had to march to their classes. They also had to march to the hotel three times a day for meals. So the contrast was amazing. I just felt very lucky about that whole thing.

Getting there, of course, was another thing. There were 75 of us ex-enlisted that came from Washington on a train. Now, we were supposed to have sleepers, but we didn't get sleepers. And I think we were in a couple of cars, and they took the cars off at New Haven and left them on a siding overnight. And we were sleeping through. By this time it was getting on towards the end of November, and it was cold. And, of course, we were all fixed up with everything, going through the dry cleaners and pressing and all that. And we were sleeping with our raincoats under our heads, and you can imagine what that was.

So we straggled into Northampton in late morning. I'm all set--let's go to bed, kids. We were assigned our rooms, and I hadn't been there half an hour and my name was called "Front and center downstairs!" And I went downstairs. And I had been assigned to take a group of the newly-caught apprentice seamen down to the uniform shop. I didn't even know where the uniform shop was. It was four blocks down the street. They told me where to look for it. I could have missed it for all of that. So I taught them their left foot from their right foot in a hurry.

C: And off you went.

W: I got them there; and then, of course, I had to wait while they were fitted and all that to bring them back. I didn't get the rest that I thought I deserved. And again, this was the same situation. And it was the same situation through the whole of World War II, and that was that the private stores sold the uniforms. In Northampton, Filene's, as I recall, was one of the uniform shops. The WAVES had to be fitted into their uniforms.

C: Did you find the classes challenging at the midshipmen's school?

W: Yes, they were very. Now, the head of the Ships & Aircraft
Department at Northampton had been in charge of the dormitories
at Rhode Island State College, Mary Evans Chase. She and all the
other officers, after the evening meal at the hotel, had gone
through the list of the people coming into the classes, and she
had seen my name on the list, so she was looking for me. We had a
long conversation there, and I could see my company commander
watching us, and I knew there would be no problems from there on
in. Now, she and I both belonged to the same sorority, although I
never saw her at the place, Sigma Kappa, and the sorority wanted
a picture of us together for their magazine. So that was
arranged, for a picture to be taken. But she worked out so well

with Mildred McAfee Horton, that she went on to Wellesley to teach after World War II.

C: Did you find the curriculum challenging there?

W: Oh, yes.

C: Did you find it duplicative of what you had learned--?

C: It was to a degree because naval organization is naval organization. I think I had to study a little better at midshipmen's school, and courses in aircraft. I always thought that was very funny because most of that was identification, and I can still remember the exam in it. The Yellow Peril, so-called, was a training plane of simple dimensions. And on one of the exams they had an amphibious craft, Catalina, yellow, and at least half the class identified it as the Yellow Peril.

C: That's amusing. Did you make any friendships that were lasting and permanent at Northampton?

W: No, not really. Because for one thing, we were transferred to different places, and we didn't see them after that. I'm trying to think. I don't recall seeing any of the ones that I knew in Northampton later, during the rest of World War II. Whereas, I had kept in touch with some of my enlisted friends.

C: Oh, that's good. During this time frame, did you keep up with news about the war and what was happening in Europe and the South Pacific?

W: Well, the only way they did it was they had an instructor who gave us the status of the war. Because, well, we didn't have newspapers available to us anyway, if we had had the time to read them. We would have had the time in Northampton; we wouldn't have had down at Hunter, though. They gave us lectures on it, using charts of the Pacific Ocean and a pointer, which were very interesting and hair-raising, to say the least. I can remember the names Truk and Guadalcanal and all the rest of them.

C: So you got that information.

W: Yes.

C: Past tense. Did you ever have a chance to meet Captain Underwood, who was head?

W: No, I didn't. But I used to see him. And, of course, he lived in the Coolidge House right there. Of course, Mrs. Coolidge had turned it over to the commanding officer.

C: Did you ever have a chance to meet Mildred McAfee, or to see her?

W: No. She was at our graduation, and she had just put on her four stripes. It was very impressive. Up until that time she'd been a lieutenant commander. And my parents had come up and stayed overnight. Of course, they couldn't stay at the hotel. But they had arrangements for parents, and they were at the graduation, and very impressed by her. There was a commandant of midshipmen at Northampton. That's what they call it at Annapolis. And I'm not sure what her title was at Northampton. Some of these things escape me. But she had a meeting two nights after we arrived of all the ex-enlisted there. Of course there were 75 from Washington, but there were also a number from the rest of the country. I thought that we were going to be congratulated on getting to midshipmen's school; we weren't. She was giving us hell.

C: For what?

W: For our predecessors. It seems that our predecessors had been less than flexible, malleable, or whatever. And unfortunately, a good many of the instructors up there had never gone out and met the real Navy. And they taught what they had been told to teach, which wasn't necessarily the way it was done in Washington or anyplace else. And I would never have interjected myself in any of this; it was not politics, at least. But again, some of our predecessors had bucked, you know, and said, "No, it isn't that way at all. Let me tell you what it is." So the object of the

lecture that we were getting was that we could be tossed back into the enlisted ranks very readily, that we'd better shape up. And giving us powerful examples of all that. I thought it was all very funny.

C: Oh, it is. I never heard of anything like that.

W: I can understand why it was necessary, though.

C: Yes.

W: I mean you don't embarrass your instructors that way.

C: Absolutely. Did you write letters home during World War II to your parents describing your experiences?

W: I'm sure I did. I know that my mother kept letters. But when she died, we found boxes full of letters in the summer cottage. But I didn't find any from-- Well, I'd have to say the reason for that was--and I'd forgotten until just now--my parents moved back to Maine from Providence in 1945. By that time, I was in Newport. I had spent quite a few in between--I can't say weekends, but working watches; it was very seldom weekends. But I'd go home in between stretches. But my father decided that he would sell the saloon because he expected the beer refrigeration would go out on him, and he knew he couldn't get them replaced, and the smart

thing to do-- And he was doing a roaring business after some lean years before I went to college. Once the war started there was a shipyard near us. I think they spent a lot of time in my father's saloon, which was very helpful, but maybe not to the war effort.

So he sold out, and then they moved to Maine. And I didn't know when they were moving because they didn't have a telephone. That has a long story I won't get into. But anyway, I went home one time, and the place was empty. Looked through the windows, and nothing. I knew they were going, of course. But in those days, when you were moving anywhere, it was strictly at the convenience of the moving van, and whether they had the gas and everything else and could do it. And they got short notice, and they were gone. But they had bought a farm near where our summer cottage was up there, and they had moved in, and they fixed it up. And in 1947, when I was in law school, forest fires raged through Maine. They took a lot of Bar Harbor out, for instance. They took the eastern part out. They took half of our town out. The cottage on the lake was spared, but the farm went. And so I'm sure that with that went all my letters and everything else from that time.

C: Now, that's a shame because they would be a wonderful record of your impressions, of your experiences.

W: Yes. Because I know that she saved those things because we found all the letters when she died. But it was since that time.

C: Yes, yes. Well, you mentioned that after you graduated from midshipmen's school, you went to communications school.

W: Yes. That was at Mount Holyoke.

C: And how long were you there?

W: Two months.

C: And what was the curriculum like there? Can you describe it?

W: Yes. There was typing because we really had to type on coding machines. That was the principal thing. The rest of the curriculum had to do with radio procedures and that sort of thing, such as the radiomen have to know. You have to know what these things meant, messages and that. And we also had Morse Code. That was an interesting thing because, fortunately, one of my roommates there was an ex-radioman. So she already knew the Morse Code. And I was having a lot of trouble with it, and she was very kind after lights out—she drilled me on Morse Code, and I was able to get through without too much of a struggle. But some of the others had a terrible time. For one thing, da da dada, you know, "The Wedding March," is one of the letters which I don't even remember now. But they decided that that was an easy way to remember the letters and the Morse Code and all that. So they attached other tunes, or bits of tunes, to other letters.

Now, you'd be taking an examination in Morse Code, and you'd hear this frantic humming going on all over the room, and, of course, you couldn't possibly keep up with what you were receiving and still be figuring out songs and a few other things. So I was very lucky on that. It was funny, because we had a third roommate in the room who paid no attention to this--I mean the fact that she was drilling me. She could have joined in, but she didn't. It probably didn't make any difference in the long run.

C: Oh, that's interesting. So you graduated from there finally after two months, completed that course. And where were you assigned next as a communicator?

W: Newport, next door.

C: At the Com Sta [i.e., communications station] here, which has been torn down.

W: Yes, that was the building that was between here and what was the old training station administration building.

C: Exactly, yes.

W: But that was a small cottage that had had a big building attached directly right in back of it. And then after we arrived there, they took the roof off the small cottage and put it up a

story because the coding room we had was about 9 x 12, and there were-well, of course we were working three shifts. But, you know, we'd have four or five people in there at a time; you can't believe what it was like. The reliefs for all the men who were there at the time I arrived came in from the Pacific. But they didn't have orders yet for the others who were slated to go to sea, so that made it worse.

C: What exactly was your job, though? What were you doing with the other WAVES?

W: Ciphering and deciphering, coding and decoding. And then with various—without going into the ramifications—there were various methods of doing this, part of which was machinery, the coding machines and everything. That was where the typing came in. With the communications school, I knew enough when I went in there never to admit that I knew how to type because I didn't intend to become a yeoman. So obviously you don't say anything about it. But the thing was that when we came back from Maine— We didn't get back from Maine from when we were in junior high until after Thanksgiving. And the class we went into, it had had typing from September on, and of course they were finished in January. And they wouldn't—even though we'd had so little of it—they wouldn't let us have any more. It just didn't fit into their framework. So I knew touch typing, but not very well. You know,

it was letter by letter, and not the drills that you get with the combinations of letters and things like that.

Now when I went to the communications school, you learned to type five-letter code groups. And it was a snap for me because I was letter-to-letter all the way because of my very limited experience with touch typing, whereas others, who were farther advanced, had a helluva time typing five-letter code groups, because they didn't break it down very well. It was kind of funny because the instructor in the class said to me, "Were you in communications before when you were enlisted?" And I said, "no." And she thought I was lying because everybody was disclaiming any knowledge of coding or anything like that because they weren't supposed to talk about it anyway. And she figured that I had to have been doing it before because I did so well on the typing. And I never bothered to explain why.

C: It's interesting. How many shifts did you work, and how were your shifts organized at the Com Sta?

W: Well, there were three shifts. Now when I went there for a year and a half, they had a very interesting way of doing it. A lot of people thought it was lousy. They did eight on, eight off for three shifts, and then you went off for 56 hours. Which meant that while you were there, you were either working or sleeping.

c: Exactly.

W: I liked it myself. But I could understand why a lot of people didn't like it.

C: What did you like about the work that you did there?

W: Well, it was interesting. You know, I mean it was interesting to know-- Your main messages, they were always convoying reports because they had to know where the convoys were and then, you know, the wolf packs and submarines. So you had your convoy reports. Those were all--they gave the position of all convoys every day. And that report was updated. It was enemy submarine reports and friendly submarine reports and where they were. And at least from that it was kind of interesting. Although mostly latitude and longitude and all that. But that was an interesting thing because some of the-- If we'd get this coded material on the teletype, it was all right. But if it was taken down by radiomen, we might have trouble getting it deciphered.

C: What did you do with this information once you got it?

W: It was typed up and it went to Operations. They had big maps on the walls opposite in that big building. It was attached to a little building in front.

C: Oh, in back of the Com Sta. The annex.

W: They had this big Operations office, and they had-- We were kept outside for the most part. It wasn't until the end of the war that I really got inside because they had a little window where we'd bring the messages, they'd sign for the messages, and that was all.

C: Oh, I see. Oh, interesting.

W: We had a little trouble with that because if we had had maps, we could have done it. But there were a couple of times when they put convoys up the Hudson River or someplace else other than where they were supposed to be, and by the time I arrived, the chief of staff was a little tired of this. They had had the latitude and longitude of the signal power posted in the code room. And when you started to pick up the messages to take them to the chief of staff, you looked at that and tried to memorize it, I guess, as you were supposed to. He might ask you it, and you were supposed to know it. It was the president misplaced in the center of a convoy.

C: What didn't you like about the job?

W: Well, there were some of the codes that we had to decipher that would put you to sleep anyway. And having it on a big board, it was almost possible you'd get half way through it and momentarily drift off, which meant that you had to start from

scratch again. Things like that. But I liked the people, and I liked the way the work was factored. After we had been doing a lot of this, we all got the communication watch officer deal, which was taking the messages, logging them in, and keeping track of them. You had a problem on the messages. Some of them didn't have the real addresses. They were encrypted, which means the addresses were encrypted inside. And so in order to be sure that you got it to the right places—We were dealing out through Melville, the P.T. place up there, and a lot of these other commands. And the address would be actually inside the message, not at the top. And the communications watch officer had to see that that was done without—that was the only place where we could find this connection because otherwise someone getting hold of that material could have broken the—they used to encrypt the call signs that went there.

C: Oh. Do you remember who the CO was of the Com Sta?

W: Oh, that was Pennypacker all the way. He was a commander there, and he made captain after World War II. A lot of the Reserves who were World War I Reserves, the men mostly were up there in rank at the end of the war.

C: How were you treated by the men that you worked with?

W: The fellows that worked with us—and they were all our same age; they'd been to colleges with us and all the rest—they were great. Most of the enlisted were great. A little hesitation there. There were a couple of chiefs, male chiefs, that I could really have deep—sixed in no time flat. As a matter of fact, Mary and I ran into a problem after the end of the war. But Pennypacker was gone, and there was a mustang, whose name escapes me now, who was in charge of the place. But that was all right; he was fair enough. But, of course, we were working the watches. Because now there again, there were only three of us left at the end before I left.

C: What year was this now?

W: This was 1946 now. So we had to work 24 hours a day. And for a while we could go home, but we would be on call in case we had to come back. There wasn't all that much encrypted stuff after the war, although there was a certain amount of it—more than I think there should have been. But anyway, we had moved upstairs when they raised the roof, and that gave us a great big expanse that we didn't need. It's either rags or riches. Then when it was all over, we had to get out of there because we couldn't control all the accesses or anything else with the limited number of personnel. We had to move back down at that point to the small space that we had occupied was no longer available.

They had a big safe that was right in the new Com Center. But, despite the fact that it was a safe, they had been using it as storage for the daily traffic, the records, and had kept them there. Well, it was decided to put a couple of coding machines in there, and we could go up-- There wasn't any source of fresh air, but you weren't worried about that in those days. I can remember Lieutenant Williams went in there with a saw, and he took out part of the shelving that was in there, leaving some of it hanging from nothing as far as I could see. And we got the coding machines in there, and then we were doing that. But we had desks outside in the new Com Center itself where we'd manage the watch. But it was difficult because we had to cover an awful lot of hours. And there was a period of time there they had a bed upstairs in the annex up on the third floor where the operations officer was. But you could get into it by not going into Operations but by a back door. And I went up there one night at two o'clock to go to bed, and there was a man in my bed. What had happened was they were breaking in a new watch stander in Operations.

Now by that time they had so few left in Operations that the training station officers came over and took the duty watch in Operations, and they were always breaking new people in. They had excess men and whatnot, and they said, "Well, why don't you take the bed in there. The stewards come in and make up that bed, and I've never seen anybody in it." Well, nobody ever saw us in it because we went up there at two o'clock in the morning and left

at six. So I go up, and there's a man in the bed. And so I spent the rest of the night downstairs mad.

C: Oh, boy!

W: And I was up at the crack of dawn saying, "What are you doing to me?"

C: Yes. Oh, that's horrible! You were there roughly then from 1944 to... in Newport?

W: To '47.

C: To '47.

W: I left in January of '47.

C: Oh, so you were beyond the war and six months duration. You were extended then.

W: Yes.

C: Like many of the gals were.

W: Well, that's why I made lieutenant. You see I made lieutenant j.g. in the beginning of the summer of '45. And then, the war

ended, that was really promotion draw ended. But everybody was being allowed to go on the basis— They had the point system going at that time, and there were some of us that were later than others that were left. And all of a sudden they realized that they had to have trained communicators to a certain extent, and they were going. Well, they put through an "ALL NAV" that said that if you were willing to extend, they would give you a promotion on the spot. It was interesting because Boston—and they were our bosses at that time, the Com Station up there—they decided they wouldn't give any of these. But Pennypacker was agreeable, and Jean Tate and I got the promotions.

C: So you were promoted to lieutenant.

W: Lieutenant, yes, about eight months after we made j.g.

C: Oh, that's great.

W: Yes. But it was a spot promotion. And when I went regular
Navy in '49 and came back on active duty at that time, I took my
regular Navy commission as a j.g.

C: Oh, I see.

W: But I held the other during active duty for training. When I was up at law school, I did a couple of stints of two-week training periods.

C: You were in the Reserves by that time.

W: But I was still a lieutenant. I was drawing the pay.

C: Oh, that's interesting. How many WAVES worked with you at the Com Sta here in Newport? Was there a whole contingent assigned, or a few?

W: During the war, it was almost evenly balanced with male and female. And we thought it was rather nice that the officer in charge of the encrypting and all that— Well, actually, the Com Sta stuff— Pennypacker was more over all including telephones and other things, but the officer in charge was Lt. Monda, who was a mustang. But he was very agreeable to seeing that we went and took anything that was available. And then our predecessors, the gals that had been there since '43, had been trained as watch officers. So that they weren't spending their time encrypting and decrypting. And when our time came, they allowed us to be trained, and we worked it.

C: Something more interesting.

W: Yes.

C: Challenging.

W: Yes. And I thought it was very good of the gentlemen.

C: Did you live on base in the WAVES' quarters?

W: There were none for officers.

C: Not for officers, okay. Right. So you had to live in the town.

W: Yes. The enlisted were in their barracks down there. You know periodically they got flooded out.

C: Yes, that was south of the O'Club.

W: That's right.

C: Exactly.

W: But the officers, we all lived in town. Now, this could be a rough deal because when Jean Tate and I came in in April of '44, Newport was crowded. Now, you know the summer season was not--of course there with a war going on. We reported in on a Sunday, and they were able to get us a room at the M.K., which no longer exists, for one night. But we were told that it was going to be only one night, and that they were going to be full other than that. And that night was the Sunday night. We went in to work Monday to meet everybody. And the officer in charge--it was raining like hell--the officer in charge decided that we can't go out looking for a place to live because it's raining anyway. So

we'll stay there, and we can go in the afternoon. And we were too afraid. We were too new as ensigns to say we don't have a place to stay. We left our bags packed in the cloakroom or something at the M.K. Literally, we didn't have a place to stay.

So he did let us go out in the afternoon. And I think that the USO had a place with the YMCA. I think we went in there, and they had lists of places available. I know we checked at two or three places through this awful rain. There was a boardinghouse on the street. It comes down from the Viking.

C: Touro Street maybe? (No, on the south side of the Viking.)

No, it's on the other side. There was a boardinghouse. Well, W: it wasn't really a boardinghouse. It was a one-family house, but they had about six rooms that they used to rent out. There was only one bathroom. But we were working shifts, which helped us no end, because there were other people in there whom I'm sure were temporary workers in there. And at nighttime there was a line outside of the door to get into the bathroom. Talk about terrible conditions! Now, around the corner on School Street, there was this old building--I think it was the old Governor's Mansion-that had had an addition put on to it. A man named Evans took it over, and he made apartments out of it. Now, for bathroom fixtures and all that, there was no chrome available during the war, and we had these strange iron things as water spigots and all that. But who's complaining? As a matter of fact, we had that in the Arlington Farms because we didn't have any chrome. But he

had fixed it up, and he had shower stalls there. Not bath tubs, but shower stalls. However they did have iceboxes instead of refrigerators, which was kind of interesting because we had to get the icemen in to get the ice in the house.

C: So did you move into that apartment --?

W: We were able to get in. One of the officers, one of the male officers, at the Com Station was there, and he spoke a word for us. And we were able to--I think it was after eight or ten weeks--of this awful thing. Well, it wasn't so bad because I went up to Providence. So I didn't have to go through a lot of this stuff. And these were furnished. They weren't well furnished, but they had what you needed: bed and tables and what have you, chairs, chest of drawers. And in fact there were a couple of friends of ours took an apartment in there who were in Operations. And after the first apartment we were in, we were able to get a better one.

C: Yes, moving up.

W: Moving up.

C: Did you room with this one woman that you mentioned?

W: Yes, Jean Tate. We'd come in together, and we roomed together. Now, at that time, the WAVES had this place up at Six Greenough Place.

C: What was that place?

W: It was owned by an Admiral McNamee, and he had a summer house in Jamestown, and he had this other. Actually I think he was an older retired admiral. He was old enough so that he wasn't involved in World War II. And I think he must have been going other places, Florida or whatever in the wintertime and Jamestown in the summertime. But they had leased it out, and the WAVES had taken over. Now, there were usually six, I believe, at a time.

C: They were living there.

W: Yes. And they would--

C: This is the second tape of the oral history with Lieutenant Commander Louise Wright, USN. And we were talking about her time in Newport at the Communications Station. And I believe we mentioned where the WAVES were living in Newport at that time--or where she lived with her friends. Can you comment on that?

Yes. Originally I lived in a boardinghouse for a five- or six-week stretch with the WAVE officer who had reported in with me, Jean Tate. And it was a tough row to hoe because there were about five or six bedrooms that were letting out in the place, and there was one bathroom. Fortunately we were working shifts, so we were not always there trying to get in when other people were. But we were able to get into an apartment-type arrangement on School Street where they'd taken over an old building and renovated it to put apartments in. One of the officers living there was able to get us in with the landlord, and we took an apartment there. And we were there about a year until they had people move out of Greenough Place. They usually had six people up there, and we were invited to fill the gap, and we did move up there. But this was the summer that the war in Europe had already ended, and we did not know we were going into the last phase of the other. It was a good living arrangement because the house was furnished and everything was stocked. We had a running order, weekly order, that was delivered from the Newport Market for food. We deposited our stamps for sugar, canned goods, or meats every quarter. And then they threw in the stamps. And somehow or

other we never ran out.

We had a woman who cleaned the place for a while. But, unfortunately, we paid \$25 or something for a used piano, which we installed in one of the front rooms. She would play the piano at noontime on her break, except there were always people sleeping in the house because of the different shifts, and we couldn't seem to convince her that she shouldn't play the piano. So we ended up doing these things ourselves. We divided up the work and took care of it. One of the things I was in charge of was that order at the market, calling in supplements to it. But we had to plan it. We ate more lamb chops than I ever care to think about because this was the easy way to take care of things like that. And we also had a standing order for probably a dozen oranges a week, which wouldn't have been too much for six people, except that at some time or another they stopped eating oranges, and first thing you know we had the refrigerator filled with oranges. So I thought of something. I think this must have been about Christmas or New Year's time because I spent a morning squeezing orange juice with the thought of orange blossoms and a few other things for the holiday season. And shortly after I finished, the doorbell rang, and I went, and it was a crate of oranges that my parents had sent from Florida where they were spending the winter.

C: Oh, quite an interesting living arrangement. What did you do for recreation with these gals? Did you have parties there?

W: We had a lot of parties. Anything that came up, we invited people in and all that, because they'd given us two front rooms; a living room and what would have been, I guess, a drawing room. We would pick up the carpet and get all the furniture out of the drawing room and dance. And it was very nice from that arrangement. The house itself was behind a big hedge, so we were spending our time out sunning—those were in the days before cancer came to the forefront. And everything was going fine. But then all of a sudden the war was no longer on.

C: Do you remember how you celebrated or what your reaction was on V-J Day?

W: I remember many things about it. Of course we knew it was winding up because we had seen the plain-language messages that went to all the enemy submarines—or at least they hoped they went to the enemy submarines—telling them how to surrender, and put their searchlights up on the sky, and take various steps, and what ports to come into and all that, that gives you a feeling that things are coming to an end. Of course, we didn't know about— This was the end of the European war, and we didn't have any idea that the war in the Pacific would be over so fast. And that did come as a big surprise. Because there was nothing to tell us that something like that was going to go on. And when it finally came, it was a big crash.

Now the evening that it had been said that it was all over,

I had to work, and so I was at the office. There was a ship that had orders to sail from New York or someplace, and they sent their usual message in which was "Request permission to get underway." And then they added, "But we don't want to." The ships in the harbor were using their searchlights all over the skies and everything else like that. The next day everybody decided that we should go out to dinner at some fine restaurant. We were looking at a place in Tiverton or something like that. I had my brother's car. He had been in Europe in the Army. And I didn't have much gas. But at that point the gas restrictions were suddenly lifted. They were lifted right at the end of the war. And so we got in the car and sputtered off. Everybody in Newport and everybody everywhere else was doing the same thing. There were jams all over the place. There were cars by the side of the road with their radiators boiling over. You've never seen anything like it. When we got to the restaurant where we were going, everybody else in the state was there, too. So we turned around and came back. That's what we did on that day.

The interesting thing about the lifting of the gas restrictions with the use of the little gas coupons was the fact that they announced immediately after it was lifted, the boys that were on watch (they used the term "boys" advisedly, of course) took out their gas stamps, put it under the glass on the desk, because the thought was, well, we don't need these anymore, but do we trust these people to give us the straight news? So in case of necessity, I can go under that glass and get those

coupons back. But it was all over then. As I said, we didn't reach any restaurants or anything else.

C: So that was your attempted celebration on V-J Day?

W: Yes.

C: How did you feel about the end of the war?

W: Well, as I say, nobody expected it, at least in our echelon. And all of a sudden it was as different as day from night. Now, for instance, the Tennis Hall of Fame, of course, the Newport Casino was the officers' club for the area at that time. And we spent a lot of time up there. Everything died down afterwards. All of a sudden everyone was looking ahead to getting out of the Navy, getting back to what they were going to do. This whole party atmosphere just died.

C: Evaporated.

W: It was gone. Everyone was starting to plan ahead because they were worrying about what they were going to do, which was one of the reasons that I eventually left Six Greenough Place because I couldn't get any readings from the rest of them how long they wanted to stay in. Of course they had a point system set up for getting out based on how long you'd been in the service and where

you had been.

C: Well, during this time frame, when you were at the Communications Station, from '44 on, did you have any additional responsibility? Were you given any additional responsibility by Captain Pennypacker?

W: Well, I had started out in the coding room as a coding officer and eventually was trained as a communication watch officer and was doing both kinds of jobs. At the end of the war, when things started shifting, I was selected to be custodian of the registered publications and took over that. And that became more or less a day job, and then I more or less supervised the giving out of the general messages where the ships came into port. Because occasionally they would lean on the yeoman that were working in the office, and we had to keep that one straight. But then, as more and more people left, I had to go back to watch officer duty because there weren't very many of us left in there. At this same time, I was trying to get a feel for how many wanted to stay in as long as they could, or how many wanted to get out. Because I didn't want to be left with the house up at Six Greenough Place.

C: When did you finally get out of the Navy?

W: January of '47.

C: Oh, so you stayed on a good year and a half after.

W: Yes. But I moved out of Greenough Place and back to the place where I had been. I got a small apartment there by myself because I was afraid I was going to wake up one day and find myself with a house on my hands.

C: Right. Did you stay at the communications station until '47?

W: Yes.

C: Oh, you were here in Newport until then. But that must have drawn down quite a bit.

W: Well, it did. Of course now one of the things--just to go back a trifle on this--when I first went in there, the coding room was just off the general communications office on the first floor. It was a small room. We had no room to work, we had no room to-- I can always remember the men screaming about the WAVES pocketbooks in the coding room. They thought, I guess, that we were going to take classified stuff out of there and all that. But anyway, it was a terrible situation. But they had raised the roof on the cottage that was the front part of that building, and eventually they took over the whole second floor--or what became a second floor--over that communications station downstairs. Now all of a sudden we had more room than we could possibly use. And

it was divided up very poorly because they divided it into three strips which caused all kinds of problems when they put the communications watch officer in the middle of the room, and he could push buttons to open and shut the doors, but he couldn't go through those doors himself.

But, in the meantime, before we made this move to the upstairs part, the reliefs came in for the male officers who would be leaving the Communications Station to go to the Pacific for the most part. They arrived. But no orders arrived for the men who were waiting for orders. And so to top the fact that we already were crowded in there, we had to fit in extra people, more than we had had in the past. And so they solved the problem by detailing four or five of us every morning to go to the pistol range to shoot pistols.

C: Oh, to get rid of you.

W: Yes, we did a lot of pistol-shooting.

C: Get some practice.

W: Well, since some of us were wearing pistols on occasion, it was probably a good idea. I don't think that it helped us particularly as far as shooting straight was concerned. And I can tell you one thing: The boys didn't have anything on the girls on that one. I think we were all equally poor on that one.

C: Well, you left the Navy. You were discharged in January '47 you said.

W: There's one other thing I think that is of interest.

C: Oh, okay.

W: Although it's not of pressing interest. And that is that shortly after the war ended, nylon stockings appeared. And some genius—and I really mean this; I'm not being sarcastic about this—decided that the first people who should get the nylons should be the women in the service.

C: Because you had those cotton stockings, lisle stockings before.

W: Yes. Well, we were also wearing rayons, which were terrible. And I had gotten to the point with my rayons where I had to redarn them every night. Because I wore through them, and I'd have to pull the old darns out and put new ones in. This was a terrible burden. And then all of a sudden we were told that they were getting a bunch of nylons in. That we should communicate our sizes to somebody, and they would figure out how many of us wanted to buy the nylons. Of course, everybody did. And depending on the size range and all, they would decide how many they could give to each one. And so this was—believe me, I hadn't been

happier about anything in my life. So we got the nylons. Well, they kept coming in at intervals; every few weeks there'd be another bunch of nylons in, and naturally you'd just go right down and get the number that you were able to get. When I left Newport, for the first time I counted up the number of nylons that I had, and I had 28 pairs.

C: Oh, for heaven's sakes! Enough to last you practically for the next ten years.

W: It did. It lasted for years.

C: Well, that's interesting.

W: I thought that was a very interesting thing because that's something I don't think people think of so much. But since I was in the darning business at that point, it made a big impression on me. And the fact that somebody had thought about this and had come to this conclusion. I thought that was great.

C: And things changed swiftly after the war.

W: Oh, they did.

C: That's an indication of how quickly they did change.

W: Everything was changing. Although I had a boyfriend at that time who was attached to an MTB squadron out of--

C: Davisville?

W: No, Melville. They were just forming up the squadron to go. And you would have thought that would have been one of the first things that they would have cut off. They would terminate so many things around, they actually got that squadron down to New York before they finally cut the ropes on it and sent it into oblivion. But certain other things moved fast. For instance, before I knew it, they had the line school established. They knew they were going to keep a lot of officers on that were going to transfer from reserve to regular Navy, and they would need some special training and so on. A lot of them would need to be able to compete effectively with the academy graduates. And so the line school went in before we really knew what was happening.

C: Well, if you have nothing more to say about the wartime in Newport--

W: Well, there was just this one other thing.

C: --we can shift here.

W: Right after the end of the war, they declared that we could

wear civilian clothes when we were on off-duty status. So we were getting a big party together which was going to be for the whole Com Sta officers and enlisted up at Six Greenough Place. And one of our radiomen went down to New York to get his civilian clothes. Everybody was happy. They were out buying things and everything. And within a few days they changed it entirely, and said absolutely not, that it would be too much of a burden on the civilian economy. They had all the people getting out of the service who were going for civilian clothes; and if you were staying in service, they'd best keep you in uniform, so they did. That went on for a year, that we were still expected to wear our uniforms off duty, which was kind of a shock. We'd go down to the store, and you'd see a big raincoat on a WAVE, but the flap would open in the back, and there was a different color of skirt or whatever underneath. This was another thing that the men used to do: The only time you could wear civilian clothes was off duty when they were going out for sports. The men would take off their collar bars from their khakis so that they became anonymous. At that point they would take a tennis racquet in one hand and a bag of laundry in the other and head for the laundry. And if they ran into one of their bosses, at least they had the tennis racquet to justify what they were doing.

C: Right. Well, you finally left the service in January 1947.

And what did you decide to do at that point in time? What were your career goals or your interests?

W: I decided to go to law school. A group of us, some officers and some enlisted, made special arrangements with the Education Department in Providence to take aptitude tests and things of that nature. And as a result of these tests, we were steered in various directions. And I had decided to go to law school if there was a--

C: Why law school?

W: I had been able to interpret the strange language that the Navy and the government uses; and I thought, well, if I can do this, I can probably do law. I had audited a course—when I was in college majoring in biology—I sat in for a few sessions on a commercial law course in the business administration section just to get some kind of feeling for it. And I didn't like what I saw, so I had ruled that out at that time. But that changed later.

C: Well, wasn't that kind of unusual in 1947 for a woman to be considering law school? This is long before the women's movement.

W: Oh yes, very much so. When I did apply up at Boston
University and I was up there for my interview, I asked the woman
at the desk in the administration office how many women they had
there. And they had a total of about 1200 in the school in
various capacities—some full time, some evening school, and that
kind of stuff—only 60 of whom were women. I thought, well, the

odds sounded pretty good to me. And in my own class, that started in May of '47 and ended in May of '49, there were only four of us.

C: That's very small.

W: Yes.

C: Did you feel isolated at all?

W: No.

C: Did you feel discriminated against?

W: Never. That was an interesting thing about it. I may have expected something like that, but it didn't happen.

C: Now at that time it would seem that it might have. Kind of you just didn't fit.

W: Well, the thing was that the marking was pretty objective, not subjective, in that our marks depended on the examination at the end of the course. That was the mark. Now theoretically it was supposed to be reciting and all that, but there was no provision that I ever saw for putting in any kind of a mark for that activity. As far as I could see, the only mark was given on

that final exam, and there wasn't a problem.

C: And you graduated rather high in your class. Can you tell us what rank you were?

W: I was 17 out of 138.

C: So you were at the top. Did you want to focus in any special area of the law, or was this just general?

W: Actually, the only thing that I didn't really want to get into was criminal law, which of course I immediately proceeded to do.

C: I think it's interesting that the course was two years.

W: It was accelerated.

C: Oh, I see.

W: When I was graduated from college, the last year we were at college, because the war was on, we went the summer—that was the first accelerated class. The Class of '43 went in the summer and the fall, and ended up in January. And this was the same thing in reverse. At law school this was the last class to accelerate. It started in May of '47 and ended in May of '49. I almost missed it

because I had been out in Arizona, and I had assumed that I was going to be going into the next class convening. And I missed somewhere along the line that I was supposed to designate a particular time to enter. I came back from Arizona, and I was staying with my grandfather in Rhode Island, and I went up to the school, and I said I want to start—I had been accepted—I want to start in May. Is there going to be a problem about that? No, don't see any problem at all.

I went back to Rhode Island, and I didn't hear anything from them. This sort of thing rings bells with me, so I went back to Boston to find out. And when I walked in the office, the women at the desk there had this very skittish look on their faces. And they said, "We're sorry to tell you, but they decided that that class was closed. You can't start until fall." And I said, "Is there someone I can speak to?" Yes, the law school registrar. I talked to him, and I said, I was out of the Navy. I did not have really a place to live. I had no job. I needed to get started as soon as possible. It was my error that I didn't make sure that I was scheduled for that class. But that it put me in quite an impossible position. And he said, "All right. You can go in."

C: Good! Oh, that's great! That's great. Did you go on the G.I. Bill?

W: Yes. Sixty-five dollars a month for food, but they paid for all your tuition and books and all the rest of that. I was able

to get a place in a kind of a settlement house in the north end of Boston, not far from the school, within easy walking distance. In back of Beacon Hill, really, near Massachusetts General Hospital and the like. And it was a place for women of low income. You couldn't be making more than \$30 a week which was easy enough for me on \$65 a month. And I think they took off maybe six or seven dollars, and of course that didn't bother me at all. And we weren't spending a lot of money, I didn't have transportation expenses or anything like that. Now, they raised that the second year to \$75 a month, and they proportionately raised the room and board. But that was no problem. I mean I was just grateful for the opportunity to live there. It was a good setup. You got your breakfast and your dinner, and they put out fixings for sandwiches and things like that to make sandwiches for lunch. And they had a good cook.

C: So it worked out well.

W: Yes.

C: Did your parents support you in your desire to go to law school?

W: Anything I wanted to do was all right with them, as long as I was doing something.

C: Oh, that's great! Now you got out in May of '49, and of course by that time the Women's Armed Services Integration Act had been passed as of July 30, 1948. So women could be entering both the regular and the reserve of the Navy. Why did you decide to join the Navy again?

W: I never wanted to leave the Navy. It was the saddest day of my life when I was released from active duty. I wasn't discharged because I had my reserve commission, but I was released from active duty. As a matter of fact, because of the fact that I had been talking to my mother about it, she was writing to Margaret Chase Smith and a few other people on the subject of the integration law; so when it was passed, I put in for it.

C: Oh, great! You did!

W: And the first time around I missed out. This is the letter that said, Sorry, kids, but--

C: Why did you miss out?

W: Well, "the number of well-qualified applicants desiring to transfer to the regular Navy has been far in excess of the number of appointments which can be offered. The interest you have shown..." and blah, blah, blah. This was transmitted to me in September of '48, to give you the time frame on that.

C: Right. Absolutely. So people were applying for commissions.

W: Before this time. I don't have a copy of the application that I made for this. I don't know why. But I do have a copy of the application I made for the second one. Because what happened was that so many of the ones that were offered regular commissions turned them down; they had to have a second selection. You can see how that might happen. People might say, well, gee whiz. Maybe I would like this, and—

C: So they probably turned down their commissions.

W: Yes, they turned down their commissions, and they didn't get the numbers that they had expected, and they had to have a second selection which worked well. So the second selection, this was put on in January.

C: Oh, in January of '49.

W: Yes.

C: Great. So what did you do between May '49 and--? Oh, this is January. Oh, I see, you were doing this early.

W: This is the one that says, no.

C: Yes, that's '48, right after. And you were still in law school.

W: Yes.

C: And so when did you finally join up and were accepted?

W: Well, it's one of these.

C: But it was '49. So you could go in immediately after law school?

W: Yes.

C: Oh, great!

W: Yes, it worked out. Where's this other one?

C: Oh, so you knew-- By the time you left law school, you knew you were going in again.

W: Yes.

C: Well, that's good. Where were you assigned? What was your first assignment? W: Okay. Now this is it. This was the turn down. That was the application here. Do that next.

C: And this is the acceptance. Oh, so by April '49 you were transferred into the regular Navy.

W: Well, that was my first notification of it.

C: Right, that you would be.

W: And then we had to still go through a little waltz.

C: So you knew by the time you were graduating that you were going to go back.

W: Yes. And as a matter of fact it worked out very well, because if I had been accepted the first time, I don't know what I would have done because I would have been very much torn. And at that point you didn't transfer between law schools very readily—if at all. And I would have really been in a spot on what to do. But I didn't have the problem because—

C: Well, that's good. You were able to finish the law school then.

W: Yes, I was able to. By the time I received that notification,

I knew that I was all set because I knew they couldn't move fast enough to put through the thing before I would be graduating.

Now, I received this on the 19th of May, that said that there was a special selection for us for promotion that would be convened early in June, and they wanted me to get back into the regular Navy at that point. Now, the man signing that, J.B. Gragg, Chief Staff Officer of Yokosuka, pushed me so hard on the legal end of things out in Japan, and who was so kind to me when I was back in Washington for the Industrial College. I just found that interesting because I didn't realize that he had signed that letter until I saw it.

C: Yes. It jogged your memory. Well, can we launch into your Navy career now?

W: Well, I think the return was complicated because after I received that, I sent a letter to BuPers requesting delay in-

C: Oh, a delay before entering?

W: Yes, because of the Bar Exams.

C: Oh, yes. You had to take those. Of course. When did you take those?

W: In June and in August of '49.

C: Was it for Rhode Island or Mass?

W: No, Maine and Massachusetts.

C: Oh, Maine and Massachusetts. And you passed obviously?

W: Yes.

C: So you were certified for that. Oh, so you didn't go in until later in '49 then. You had to stay out for the Bar Exams.

W: Yes. I sent this letter at that point; I write a much better letter now than I did in those days.

C: Oh, you wanted an extension.

W: I wanted an extension. Now, I received a call, telephone call, from Winnie Quick, who was then the WAVE detail officer, telling me that they wanted me back on active duty so then I could go before the selection board. And that she would give me temporary duty orders to First Naval District until after I took my Bar Exams. They had sent word up there. I interviewed with Captain Palmer on the subject, and he was perfectly agreeable to my calling in from where I was living at the time every day so they'd know I was still alive until after I took the Bar Exams because it wasn't going to be any skin off their nose--collective

noses or whatever.

So I got these orders to take my physical and to be stationed, temporarily stationed. And then, after I was all signed up and everything, and I was studying at home and all that, came through a dispatch: They were detaching me from temporary duty and assigning me to First Naval District as relief for Lillian Arslanian, who had been there for seven years, and they wanted to get her out of there. We had another little session, the Captain and I, because he said, well, if I was relieving Lillian, and she was custodian among other things, plus the fact that I had to learn what had happened in the coding department since I'd left the Navy and all. They couldn't very well leave me out on a limb like that. And I said, "Well, at least let me get the Massachusetts bar exam done." And that was being given at the end of June, I quess it was.

C: Yes, August was Maine.

W: August was Maine. So he said, "All right." He could see where I was troubled on that. But as soon as I finished the Mass. Bar, I would have to start in days to relieve Lillian to take over the--sign over for the classified pubs and all that stuff. And then start working on getting back into the watch schedule because they only had two officers doing it at the time.

C: And this is Boston?

W: Yes, this is Boston. So I did get finished with the Mass.

Bar. And then I started relieving Lillian. And then somewhere in there I had the announcement that I was selected to lieutenant.

C: Oh, so shortly thereafter you did get your lieutenant's rank.

W: Yes. Well, I was selected, but then I had to take exams.

That's what they were doing in those days. And they hadn't got it set up yet for the correspondence courses to take the place of the exams.

C: What did you like about this assignment?

W: Well, I liked the people, and I liked the place. I didn't want to spend my time in communications. But this, at least, was a transition point for me. I was able to contribute something to the command that they badly needed because at that point there weren't all that many trained communicators running around. Reserve Commissions showed me as a W.C., which is not water closet, but it's Woman Communicator. But when I went regular Navy, I became an 1100, and the W.C. was washed out of the affair. So the thing then for me to do was to get myself out of Communications as fast as I could.

C: Into another area of expertise.

W: Yes.

C: Was the JAG Corps at all open for women?

W: No, it was not.

C: So that's unfortunate.

W: It was not. In the first place, they didn't have a JAG Corps. They had the 1600 designated for legal officers. When they accepted us—when I say "us," the group that were selected from World War II to become regular Navy—it was only for either 1100, or they took some supply corps and stuck them in. But they did not take them for the designators like that. I ran into a reserve man later who had an engineering degree designated, but it was the same thing. At that particular time you were either 1100—for we were staff corps, medical, service corps, something like that.

C: Yes, women were attracted to certain areas.

W: Because later on I became acquainted with others who had gone to law school as I had in the interim before going back. And we were all in the same position pretty much.

C: Did it bother you that you weren't using your legal training

in a direct way?

W: It didn't at that time because I figured that I was going to be slotted in at what I was doing anyway. And I would sit and see what I could do in that. If I did not make it, it wasn't going to bother me too much because I'd still—the Navy was my first love anyway. So the other was secondary. And, furthermore, I had figured out by that time anyway that a legal degree or training or whatever is good for all kinds of things—if only it sharpens your mind in certain directions which don't necessarily have to be in the legal field.

C: Right.

W: So it was something that I had in back of me, and there certainly are peripheries that you can use your legal training in without being directly a lawyer or anything else.

C: Right. Sure.

W: So I was all set on that fact. It was just a matter as these other things arose, such as the training at the Justice School for the Uniform Code of Military Justice that was coming in. I could get that in. I could get my designation as a trial and defense counsel for a general court. I was moving in that direction.

C: Great! So you had those opportunities. When did you leave the First Naval District, and where did you go after that?

W: I went to the Boston Naval Shipyard as a communications superintendent.

C: Now was that out in Charlestown?

W: Yes. Although they had the branch in South Boston. But that was just a branch of the Boston Shipyard itself.

C: Were you a lieutenant then?

W: Oh, yes. I had made lieutenant in the first part of '50. And the rank went back to 1 June '49, and the pay went back there. So for all intents and purposes, I'd never really been a J.G. after going regular Navy.

C: Did you find that the men you worked with at the naval shipyard, as well as the First Naval District, were accepting of you as a woman in your position?

W: Yes, very much so. Of course, now, I wasn't in direct--

C: Well, your supervisor--your commanding officer--was obviously male.

W: Yes.

C: And then you reported to--

W: But you see you're in a world of ship repair, which is--

C: Another world.

W: --a whole different ball game. I wasn't in conflict with other officers. What I was doing was different from them. You know, the competition there, like with the engineers, I wasn't a threat to them in any capacity. So I was in free as far as that was concerned. But I saw a great deal of that kind of competition because I married one of the EDO's at Boston Naval Shipyard.

C: Oh, you did?

W: Yes.

C: Oh, I see. So you were dating a Naval officer then.

W: Oh, yes.

C: And he was an engineer?

W: He was an engineer, a graduate of M.I.T., as so many of them

were. I mean for the most part the engineering duty officers were more the specialized than—— Some of them were probably Naval Academy graduates, but a good many of them were from the special engineering schools.

C: So you stayed in Boston for 1951 and '52.

W: Yes.

C: Was there anything you didn't like about this position in communications at the naval shipyard?

W: I hadn't wanted to go there in the first place because I knew it wasn't communications as I knew it. Because it had nothing to do with the classified material, for the most part. Because anything that was classified, anything that came in code or anything else, was done over at the district and was sent over in plain language. So that I had nothing to do with that sort of thing. And it was a matter of watching over and seeing that the communications doctrine and whatever else was being properly adhered to as far as teletype machines and that sort of thing.

C: Well, you stayed there. And then after your assignment in Boston, I believe you were sent to Japan.

W: I was. But that was after I'd gotten involved in some legal

problems at the shipyard because I had been designated as the legal officer as well as the communications officer.

C: Oh, really! So you transitioned into that as well early on.

W: Well, I couldn't avoid it in a way. Because one of the first things that happened, that I think is very funny, is that my husband happened to have the duty that night for the shipyard, and I was at home. And I got a call from him at two o'clock in the morning, and he wanted to know where the manual for courts—martial was in my office. So I told him where to find it, and also they had a manual for courts and boards. And I've forgotten the title of that thing. But he was looking for that especially because in the course of his being the duty officer that night, they'd had a problem at the admiral's house. There must be a naked man running around because they'd found clothes in the downstairs basement or whatever of the admiral's house. And so it was about six degrees above zero or something like that, and they had everybody out looking for this naked man.

C: Maybe it wasn't even so.

W: No, it was.

C: Oh, it was.

W: Well, what happened was they found the clothes, and apparently they didn't--I never did ask my husband about this-they apparently didn't do a good job of searching the admiral's house because they were beating the bushes, looking for this guy outside freezing to death.

C: And he was inside.

W: So he got another call from the admiral's house that there were more noises downstairs. And when they went, they found this-the only thing he had on was a pair of socks.

C: Sounds like somebody broke in.

W: Yes, it was a sailor, I believe. And he was drunk, and he couldn't have picked a worse place to--

C: Camp out.

W: --camp out. That's right. So at this point, not waiting until morning, apparently the Commander or the administrative officer or somebody was saying--start drawing up specifications. They weren't saying that to me, but they were saying it to the people on duty. And that's why they were saying, we're looking for the books, and everything else. And by morning cooler heads had prevailed. I'm sure he was in the brig, and the regular forces

that take care of disciplinary matters such as that had stepped into the picture and taken the engineering specialists out of it. But there were two other things that happened.

There was some kind of a problem having to do with--I don't know whether it was awarding of contracts or something. But anyway, they had set up a board of investigation that was headed by a financial officer, a mustang. And this was the first time they were working under this new Uniform Code, plus the new directions on boards of investigations and courts of inquiry. And they called for making parties to these, and the book wasn't very specific about the fact that the parties to be made were members of either military or civilian part. In other words, the officer who was conducting the thing made parties out of private individuals who were involved in the contract and whatever was going on. So I could see all kinds of problems raised on that. Because when I heard about this, the first thought that hit me was, how can you make parties out of people who aren't part of the establishment? Not very easy. But I didn't have enough background on any of this to go forward. I could not go over to the district legal officer -- or I felt I couldn't -- to ask for advice because I had had such a donnybrook down with the legal officer that was down there as trial counsel from the district, that I couldn't go anywhere near the district legal office at that point, which is where the help should have come from.

C: So you really didn't have full responsibility, or did you

W: No. Well, if that had come through finally—and I think it did towards the end of my stay, but I may have been out of there before it went through—theoretically I would have been making up the endorsement for the commanding officer as to what the findings were on the board. I think I was out from under that, but I'm not altogether sure. My mind may have gone dim with thoughts of the horror of it all because I did not have the background for that sort of thing.

But the other thing that happened was that we had a chief who was running the chief petty officers' club. I was on the audit board of that club. This is all these collateral duties that you take that are very interesting if you count cases of liquor and beer and all the rest of the thing. And I came in on a Monday morning, and the Administrator Officer, my direct boss, called me in and said, "Go over to the bank and close down the accounts for the chief petty officers' club. The manager is missing."

C: Oh, boy!

W: So of course I headed for the bank, and -- It's interesting, what authority had I to shut down these accounts? But nevertheless, because of the way these things worked and the bank is in the shipyard and all that, naturally they closed down the

account. The next thing is, where is this man? And we had to have an inventory right away to find out what's missing. And he's disappeared. And a few other things. So just about the time everything's getting back to normal on that, all of a sudden we got a dispatch from Com Three in New York saying that this chief, the same one, had committed suicide in the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn. And right away the commanding officer and the administrative officer decide they don't want anybody interfering into what they consider to be their affair, so they decide they will send me to New York to take charge of this thing. And I mean this is a different district.

C: Right.

W: If it were Com One, you could have a way to work out of this thing. But this is a different district. You don't do that.

C: A different Naval district, right.

W: Now, they sent up a message with a priority on it, which they had no business putting because there's no way you can make a priority message out of assigning somebody to investigate the death of somebody at the St. George Hotel. And as the communications officer, I'm supposed to be sending that thing. Well, I'm waiting to see Com Three come through saying, we are assuming cognizance because that was the usual thing.

C: Right. They don't allow anybody--

W: So I sat on that fire and was sweating gumdrops. And Com Three, thank God, finally came through: We are assuming cognizance. My boss was in a meeting in the meeting room, and I went slipping in and slipped it to him. I was no sooner out the door than he was out the door in back of me. And he said, "Where is that message? Did you send it?" And I said, "No, I didn't." You know there are certain things that I took my chances on. But there was no way I could go down to New York and say, "I'm it. Step aside." Which is what they wanted me to do, because they didn't want anybody messing in with their affairs.

But it ended up that Com Three requested that an interrogation officer be assigned to interview the widow and to find out anything that could be found. Of course they already knew there'd been a foul up in our direction. So they knew pretty much, probably, what the background on this suicide was. But they had to round up the affair. They were conducting their investigation at their end. So I ended up having to interview—and I did—the widow. I got hold of the shipyard chaplain because he had been working with her. She was without funds and everything else. It was a horrible situation. And he made the introduction for me to make it easier for me to interview her on these things. And you try to do as much as you can to help. He must have been crazy. Something must have happened. Their board of investigation had to make findings on "line of duty," and

"misconduct" status, and background information was essential to that.

C: So you really slid into some legal cases here.

W: I was sliding into things that I probably had no business being into at that particular time.

C: As a communications officer.

W: So it worked. I eventually left all these things behind me.

And I always wondered how they made out, but I never wanted to go
find out.

C: So how did you get assigned to Yokosuka in Japan?

W: Sometime during the first half of 1952 I received a letter from Mary Lynch McCoy in Japan. She had met my husband, CDR Philip Morgan there, and he had told her I was trying for a transfer to Yokosuka. She was pregnant at that time and awaiting a relief which was continent on proof of pregnancy. She hoped I would be that relief, but she also told me about a projected vacancy in the legal office of Headquarters Support Activity. The incumbent was scheduled to return to the USA and no relief had been ordered. Based on that, I called the office of the Judge Advocate General and requested consideration for the billet from

the Captain who was concerned with detailing legal officers. I no longer can recall his name, but he was the Assistant Chief of Staff at Com Four when I reported there several years later. At the time of my call to JAG, he told me they wouldn't consider assigning a woman in Japan. He implied that was because of the nature of the crimes being processed there. Of course, later, in Japan, I finally landed in that same assignment.

Well, I went down to Washington. I never made a phone call if I could avoid it, for a number of reasons. But I always feel better talking to someone directly. I find I can sense their feeling in the matter. I get nothing from a phone call. Plus the fact that we didn't have a phone in our house because Pa didn't want one as I was growing up, and you don't get to love phones very much when you haven't had very much experience with them. And this was always a little problem that I had. So I went directly to Washington when my husband was transferred from the shipyard to find out what the situation was going to be. Now, one of my good friends from Newport days was on duty in BuPers, who was a good friend of the detail officer who was Dot Council at that time. So I had a lead-in right there.

- C: I've interviewed her.
- W: Yes. I'm sure. She's from around here.
- C: She is. She lives in Newport.

W: Yes. So I went, and I talked to her about my situation, and the fact that the rotation of my husband's ship, the flagship, Mount McKinley, AGC7, was a nine-month instead of a six-month rotation. And since they had already-- Let's see how--?

C: And he was going to Yokosuka?

W: He was already there. Because when he was transferred to the ship in San Diego, which was at the beginning of the year, the beginning of '52, I took leave and went out to San Diego with him; we took a train across country. It was fun, and I stayed in San Diego for a week or two, and then I flew back. By that time I had the situation as I understood it. So I went and talked to Dot Council about how it would work, when I would be expected to leave. Now, one of the things that the shipyard hadn't realized when they got me was the fact that they were only going to get me for about a year because I already had had two years in Boston. And even if it were at a different command, it was still expected to be a three-year tour. So I think they kind of got shortchanged.

Now, at the time that I started this procedure, the communications superintendent at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard was Ruth Sundberg, and she was a friend of Dot Council from way back. So there we are. Now, the big question was-- We knew Mary Lynch McCoy was pregnant in Japan. And it was just simply a matter of getting the frogs or rabbits or whatever to die. And

then we could get these series of transfers on the road. The idea would be to shift Ruth Sundberg from Portsmouth to Boston to relieve me, and for me to go out and relieve Mary. I don't know who was relieving Ruth. We weren't worried about that. Ruth is a Christian Scientist, and was getting back to Boston to the mother church, among other things.

C: Is she still around?

W: Yes. She's in Falls Church, Virginia. I have contact with her at Christmastime, and I've seen her when I've been in Washington at different times. Yes. She's a great scout. But anyway-- So I started with Dot Council, and Dot Council had told me that we'd had a little problem with the frogs, the rabbits, and whatever. And she didn't feel that she could put out orders until she knew that Mary was pregnant. Well, so this goes on. And Ruth Sundberg and I set up a system. She'd call Dot Council one week, and I'd call her the next so that we weren't both belaboring her at the same time. So finally, in desperation, I think she decided that Mary was going to have the baby right out in front of everybody. So she sent my orders, and she sent Ruth's orders. And Ruth came down. We had about a two-day transfer. Ruth had been doing the same job in Portsmouth. The system was the same all the way. But I remember my boss saying to Ruth, "If you're not comfortable about this, we're not letting her go."

C: But it was the same scheme.

W: Yes. It worked out all right. And I left with one of my friends. Took my car to the West Coast, and eventually arrived there. Thank God, the friend who was traveling with me was an exradioman because she knew something about voltage regulators, and she drove part of the way. At one point we were entering Illinois, I was snoozing, and all of a sudden I become aware of the fact that we've turned into a service station. And I said, "What's the matter?" And she said, "The voltage regulator's gone." I would not have known the difference myself, but she did. They fixed it, which is not the thing to do. You should always buy a new one.

C: A new one, yes.

W: But they fixed it, and so we got out in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and all of a sudden it sounded like the engine was frying an egg or something. Fortunately, we were in a place where we could settle in for the night and get a new voltage regulator and move on. Otherwise, out West you could be miles from all kinds of things.

C: You certainly can.

W: So we got out there. She headed for Seattle, which was where

she was going. And I turned in my car--I reported in, turned in my car to Oakland for transportation to Japan, and then I could sit back and relax after that. And buy shoes.

C: Right. And wait until you were-

W: Until I got told that I was going to travel.

C: Well, you had quite an arduous journey down there to Japan.

W: It was very tough.

C: Hot in Japan?

W: Well, Japan is about the same as Washington, D.C. when it comes to humidity and all the rest of the things. The only difference is that they don't really have a winter, not in the Honshu, the main island there. The two years that I was there, they only had one snowstorm, and it was on a St. Valentine's Day; I remember that. It was just a dusting, and that was it. Although if you get north of there, up in Hokkaido, that's where they have the skiing and all the rest.

C: Right, right. So it's a semi-moderate climate. Well, you had a long trek across the Pacific on a Pan Am Charter.

W: Yes. The Kit Carson was the name of it on the nose.

C: You had quite an adventure. When you got there, what was your position on the base?

W: I relieved Mary Lynch McCoy, who was the administrative assistant to Commander Fleet Activities, Yokosuka. She sat with the yeoman outside, and passed the visitors in, and took care of visitors, and that kind of thing. Now at the time that I arrived there, Commander Naval Forces, Far East was based in Tokyo. And, therefore, even though Commander Fleet Activities was commanded by a captain, all the commanding officers of the ships that came in paid a courtesy call on him, which was great. Because I met all these people that I had heard of, names that I'd heard, commanding officers of the carriers and all the other ships, and that sort of thing. And you know I was in the Navy--I was really in the Navy now.

C: Right.

W: There's something about sitting in a coding room that lacks this kind of--

C: Well, you had a lot of interpersonal contact there.

W: And I just felt-- I'd heard these stories because there'd be

several commanding officers sitting waiting, and they'd be talking among themselves, and you can't help but overhear. You hear about how the carriers are doing the pinwheel business so as not to bother with the tugs or the supplemental tugs. And they're not supposed to do that because of using the aircraft engines, as I understand it. But you hear things like this that you wouldn't hear any other place. I found it fascinating.

But one of my major activities there was to be sure that I took care of the woman visitors who inevitably were coming down from Tokyo on a two-hour trip over bouncing roads, and needed to go to a head as soon as they arrived. They would go into the captain's office, and about five minutes later he'd poke his head out and say, Mrs. Morgan, would you take care of So-and-So?

C: So did you have to take them on tours, or did you deal with them in any other way?

W: Some of them I took on tours. But in the case of these daytime visitors, who were just in and out, I had to get them to a head. Now, the building that we were in when I first got there was a big rambling building, and there was a women's head somewhere up there. I never did find out where it was. My own quarters where I was living were just about 50, 75 feet away from the building. So I could take the visitors to my quarters rather than—Because half the time, as I understood it, when you got up to the women's head in the main building, there was a Japanese

sign on it presumably saying, closed for repairs, or whatever.

C: How would they know? Did you have an apartment there or were you in Navy quarters? What type of quarters did you have?

W: They had women's quarters. Now, at the time that I arrived there, Mary was there, and there were also five or six special communicators on a special deal who did not stay there very long. Well, they were there maybe three or four months after I arrived. And then they had built a new Communications Station at Kamiseya up near Atsugi Naval Air Station, and they moved out. And so I did a certain amount of shifting around. They had civilian women there. They had women who were running the Navy exchange, Peggy De Benedictus, civilians.

C: Oh, so all these women had to be in women's quarters, and your husband was on the ship.

W: He was on the ship. Now, he had not done much of anything about finding a place for us to stay. And after I'd been there a few days, the captain said to me, "How are you making out? Is everything going all right?" And I said, "Well, I've got a problem because I can't right now get a place to stay outside. This is a little difficult." See, they did all kinds of things out there that, no problem. Not like back in the States. So he got hold of the assistant chief for administration and said,

"Take care of this." So they put a double bed in my room.

C: Oh, so you had a separate room.

W: I had a separate room.

C: Oh, I see.

W: One of the places--well, two of the places--where I lived, they had a connecting bath between two rooms. And all it was a matter of-- Like this Peggy De Benedictus just moved in on the other side of the head from me, and you'd just invite them in for a drink, meet your husband, and say, "Don't be surprised if--?

C: If you find somebody else in your bathroom.

W: --if you find somebody in the bathroom on occasion."

C: Right, right. So that's how they did it.

W: Yes. That's how they took care of that at that point. Now, you see, I got there at the end of August.

C: Of '52?

W: 'Fifty-two. And he left to go back to the States--it was just

after Christmas, if I remember. And then he was going to be nine months back in the States and then back out.

C: Oh, so you stayed there obviously.

W: Yes. So once he had left, then we were doing musical chairs in these women's quarters. Then I got busy, and I found a place—it was only part of a walled—in complex out near the emperor's summer palace that they rented out. They rented out two parts of this big spacious place, and I took the smaller of the two and got it fixed up. So that when my husband eventually got back there, we had a place to go.

C: Right. A house. And you lived there actually while you were working?

W: Well, when he was not there, I stayed on the base because I still had my quarters there.

C: Oh, I see.

W: So it was only when he was in port that we went up to the house.

C: Oh, I see. Okay. Right. So you had some privacy and didn't have everybody else around you.

W: Yes.

C: What did you like about this job in Yokosuka?

W: Well, the fact that I saw all these people. I liked the people I was seeing. This was a whole new ball game. I walked into a place, and I'm used to the customary daily setup. And the first thing I see is a sailor sitting in a chair with a newspaper in front of him, and he's got his foot up on a block, and there's a little Japanese man with a white jacket on who is shining his shoes. This is a new ball game. Boys are answering the phone:
"Mushi, mushi [in Japanese]." We've got a different language going here. There were two of the gentlemen in the white jackets: Sato and Sito. One was taller than the other, and that's how you could tell them apart. And they served coffee because this was part of the big thing with all the commanding officers coming in and that sort of thing.

C: Yes.

W: But this was kind of a new and different thing.

C: Oh, certainly. Culture shock. You're in another country.

W: They had rules. For instance, the men in the barracks, the enlisted men, could have people clean the barracks for them. They

could hire them, but they couldn't be women, naturally. Everybody that worked on the base was under a master Japanese labor contract so that there was no fooling around about short-changing the people or anything else. You had to pay a certain amount for a certain thing. Now, when I first got there, I hired a girl to make clothes for me. I had a sewing machine, and a lot of them out there have gone to school, and they can look at a picture, and they can make up a pattern for it. And I had all kinds of clothes made. And of course with my height, I never really had things that fitted me too well. And all of a sudden I was in a position where I could.

But then another thing that came-- Now, this Captain Gragg, whose signature you saw on the notification of my going regular Navy coming out of BuPers. He was chief staff officer, and he needed legal people out there in other billets. He didn't need me where I was, but he wasn't going to fight his captain. But he was going to make use of me. And the first thing that happened, I'd been there only a couple of weeks when-- We used to work Saturday mornings, and then we were off. Saturday afternoon shortly after lunch there's a knock on my door. I go to the door, and there's a sailor there saying, "You've been named recorder for a board of investigations." The Baeding Strait (CUE) has just dropped its Brow, and a lot of the people had been injured. And I said, "When is it meeting?" "Right now," he said, "over at the--"

So I'm recorder of the board of investigations. So off I go.

Now, they were getting the Brow in position. They had the

American sailors. They had the Japanese working on it. Nobody speaking the same language as anybody else. They have a warrant officer who comes out of the mess, sees that the Brow is on, doesn't know that it isn't fully attached yet. Comes charging forth because he was going on liberty in Yokosuka, and the whole thing goes down. So they have broken legs and various other things. The first thing we did when we got on the board of investigation was to go over to the hospital and interview the people. And I felt sorry because there was this young J.G. First Lieutenant from the carrier who was lying in bed with his foot in a cast held up to the ceiling. And there we are advising him of his rights. The U.S. military used what turned out to be later Miranda Rights. Right from the start of that new Uniform Code of Military Justice, one of the things it called for advising people of their rights to remain silent and all the rest of it. And that was one of the first things I did when I got there. I said, "I know it looks ridiculous, and I feel sorry for this guy because it's going to scare the hell out of him. But you've got to give him his rights. You know, this is part of our new total picture here," which we did.

Well, that was all very interesting. And then the next thing that came along, a Japanese had fallen down from a scaffolding. They had these strange ways of connecting bamboo to climb up walls and stuff like that, and sometimes it didn't work. And so this guy had fallen and died. And he was already dead and buried.

C: On Navy property obviously.

W: Yes. He was already dead and buried when they realized—First off, I think probably the labor contract called for a gratiss payment because of the death and all that. But they had to have an investigation, too. So with the death certificate in Japanese and a picture of the scaffolding that had given way, I turned in my report on the death, recommending payment. Then the next thing that happened, they picked a body out of the bay, and they wanted the Japanese to do something about it. Now the Japanese Peace Treaty had been signed in April of that year, and presumably they had taken back the civil functions. But actually it wasn't working, and they did not have a coroner's deal set up or anything like that. And so in the absence of somebody else doing it, they convened a board too. Fortunately, they knew that a seaman from one of the Scandinavian ships had drowned falling in. They were able to identify him, and this was it.

And another thing, the Council of the City of Yokosuka used to meet. There again, they now had their own independent government. But whenever they finished meeting and they passed anything, they'd troop up to Fleet Activities and report what they had done. Captain Thew would pat them on the head and say, "Very well done." And everybody bowed to everybody else, and off they'd go.

C: Did you pick up any Japanese while you were there?

W: I tried to, but it's a difficult language.

C: Oh, it is.

They had a course called "Japanese in 30 Hours." As far as I was concerned, 3,000 would be too few. I went at night. I took the course, and actually it was really designed to try to get you familiar with a lot of phrases that you would use to be able to plug them in. But by the time I would get there at night, I'd be so brain dead by that time that I just couldn't seem to absorb it the way I should. But some other people did. Now, when we were living out in the countryside, my husband would spend his evenings in the kitchen. There was chicken wire between our kitchen and the Japanese kitchen in the house, and he would spend his time talking to and learning Japanese from the lady who was the--she was the relatively young wife of the household, and she rented the place to us, but we also paid her to work to just keep the place up. I did the cooking and all that kind of stuff. When we did entertain, she could bring in a Chinese caterer, or she could do a very nice job on a Japanese meal. So we would just give her a bunch of money and say, "Pick it up and take care of it and do it."

C: Sure. That's great.

W: Then the guests come in. It's a nice way of doing business.

C: Oh, it is. Yes. So Japanese was hard. Was there anything you didn't like about this assignment?

W: I can't think of a thing because I was just so fascinated by the whole thing. I had my reservations about the Japanese. But the Japanese you met were not the ones that we think about as being the ones who were attacking our forces. The only time we'd see those would be the veterans without arms, legs, and a few other things that you saw around all the Japanese temples. They all wore white clothes, and there'd be a khaki army cap or something like that. And you'd look at them, and they'd look at you, and there was quite a bit of antipathy there.

C: Was that the only group that harbored some antipathy toward you?

W: That's the only one I saw. I mean I was quite agreeably surprised. But then you have to figure out that when I got there in '52, our people had been there since 1945, and it had made a lot of difference to everything.

C: Sure. Did you have an opportunity to travel in the Far East during that assignment?

W: We took a few trips--and this again was when my husband was back in--down to Kyoto. As a matter of fact, his ship was down

there one time, and I went down and joined them. The admiral made his car and driver available to us for the Kyoto, Kobe--what's the other name? Osaka. That is the big area, and that's where, when we went back there in 1970, for the Expo and all that, it was in that Kobe-Kyoto area. So it was kind of like old-home week. We did a certain amount of traveling up into the north on one occasion. We went to Nagoya on another. I can remember going down the river with the cormorants. You know the cormorant birds, I think they got them so they can't swallow the fish. But they pick them up, and then they take the fish from the birds. Kind of nasty.

C: Did you find it difficult to manage a naval career and marriage at the same time?

W: Well, everything is so different out there anyway that there wasn't any. Because everything was taken care of so far as you employed the people who worked for you. There was no slave labor on your part at all, which makes a lot of difference in the way things go.

C: Yes.

W: Your time away from the job is strictly your own. You're not spending it on a lot of other things.

- C: Right, right. Housework and the like. Well, when did you finally leave Yokosuka, Japan? What year?
- W: I left in September of '54. But you see by that time I had been transferred to the Headquarters Support Activity for Fleet Activities as the legal officer down there.
- C: Oh, okay. So you transitioned into legal work there.
- W: Yes. And that was done probably after six or seven months after I'd been there. It was sometime in the winter or early spring that I was sent down there, because the legal officer had left and had not been replaced.
- C: Oh, I see.
- W: And so Captain Gragg was looking at this situation. First off he sent me down there for a week when the discipline officer went in the hospital to run that show. And I came back. But I could see that the handwriting was on the wall, which was all right with me because for one thing we had moved into a smaller building next to the main one in Yokosuka. And the Commander Naval Forces, Far East and his staff had moved down. And then the commanding officers of these ships reporting in were paying their courtesy calls on him. It wasn't really going on in Captain Thew's place. And there was every reason in the world to use me

somewhere else.

In the meantime, they'd been using me on other investigations because I was part of a board. A building had burned down. It was kind of an interesting thing because we weren't allowed to talk to anybody who was in the building because they were apparently being used over in Korea--possibly Korean nationals; I don't know. But the building had burned down because it was behind a locked gate and nobody could find a key to the gates, and the fire department couldn't get in there. But this was only the start of -- This investigation was a beauty. The Far East Command, the Army Command, the overall command, had a directive out that any fire or anything like that that involved damage of more than \$10,000 had to have a technical investigation done on it. And so they had to do one on this. Of course everybody was resisting like mad. They wouldn't give us the names of the people in the place. They designated them as cook number one, this, that, and the other thing. And we were all operating this from a distance. It was the darnedest thing I have ever seen. But it was all part of trying to keep something secret. And initially we didn't have much of anything to go on. The only thing I could think of -- and the engineers on the board Weren't giving me any information -- so I was working it out as an electric malfunction because at least that's nebulous. You don't have to get into gory details.

C: Right.

W: And when we finally came down to the point where they were supposed to sign it, they said, "Gee, we can't sign this. We don't think it was electrical. Okay. What do you think it was?"

C: Arson?

W: So then they proceed to go into the furnace, which had been removed from the building, and they found a broken float which controlled a cooling system for the furnace. All of a sudden--

C: It blows up or something.

W: Yes. The furnace overheated. This caused the fire in some way. At least they had this theory when they finally got around to doing something with the furnace. This was before I went to Headquarters Support Activity as legal officer. We had two deaths. One of them was a body that was picked out in the water near the piers, and another one was a suicide in the armory.

C: Oh, so you had all kinds of cases.

W: Yes. So they made me the senior member of these boards. And because of the fact that at that time the seniority of women officers was after everybody else in the particular rank. In other words, all women lieutenants ranked after all male lieutenants.

C: Oh, so that was kind of discriminatory.

W: So the only way they could work the thing was they would give me a first lieutenant Marine Corps officer and a J.G. doctor, and then I would be the senior member of that board.

C: And you were still a lieutenant in '54?

W: Yes. So that's how they worked it to make sure I was the senior member. And I conducted these investigations. The body that had been taken out of the water they figured was someone who had been missing from an LST for about six weeks. The LST was then in Korea. When they pulled the body out and they started taking the clothes off, he was wearing everybody's clothes but his own. All the names stencilled on the clothing were different.

C: Oh, weird.

W: So we sent a message up to the ship asking for information about whose clothes he'd been wearing, who knew what he'd had on. And the message came back saying that it was So-and-so's jumper and So-and-so's this, that, and the other thing. Which would fit with what they had taken off, except that they had misplaced the clothes at the naval hospital.

So Captain Gragg said to me, after receiving the message,
"Have you officially identified this man yet? Because the next of

kin should be notified." I said, "We can't do it because they've lost the clothes." I said, "How about you using your horsepower to call the commanding officer of the hospital and find out if you can't shake it down down there." Well, he tried, and they couldn't find the clothes. But the Army CID in Tokyo were able to piece enough of the fingerprints together to get an identification for us.

And the problem with the fellow who committed suicide with the revolver was that the doctor on the board of investigations said to me, he said, "We've got a good one. There are no powder burns on the man's hand." And I said, "Oh, boy!" You know, we're expecting to find powder burns if he shot that gun. So we sent the Marine first lieutenant out to the firing range with the gun, and they did the paraffin test on his hand before he fired the gun, and they tested with the paraffin after he fired, and there wasn't any gun powder. So it just shows you, you can't tell.

C: You can't tell. You can't rely on one thing.

W: So anyway, finally they sent me to Headquarters Support.

BuPers had had a team that had been auditing the personnel

allowances in Japan. And of course the captain had kept insisting

he had to have a woman on his staff because of visitors and all

that kind of thing. And they said, "Yes," and they agreed to it,

and they went back to Washington and wrote it off.

C: Oh, so he didn't need a woman on his staff after that.

W: Well, he said he needed it, but they weren't buying that one.

C: So you were a full-time legal officer at that point.

W: Yes. They made the transfer official with orders from BuPers to Headquarters Support Activity, which was the housekeeping part of the base. They had the barracks, they had the mess halls. They had three levels of the legal office there. There was the Headquarters Support Legal. Fleet Activities Legal had a commander and a J.G. They were supervisory authority to the Headquarters Support. And then the top dog was the Naval Forces, Far East, and they had a whole slew of lawyers because they were the ones who ran the general court. But you see we were trying a lot of things at a special court that would have gone to a general court anywhere else. But because of the fact that they had so much traffic -- We were trying specialty cases you wouldn't believe. Now, ordinarily back here in the States you don't get involved in this stuff unless it's something that's been committed on a base, usually AWOL or missing movement or something like that. But out in Japan we had everything that was going on in the Japanese landscape. The Japanese did not have jurisdiction. If you had a robbery, if you had a--

C: Oh, out beyond the base.

W: Yes.

C: Oh, so you would take care of that.

W: Yes. So we had both inside the base and outside. And at one point, when the sailors came out to Japan, they were advised by their elders that if they were short of money, all they had to do was hold up a pedicab. So you had all kinds of robberies.

C: Oh, dear.

W: You had abuse of wives and girlfriends. But when they came in, the girlfriends would file a complaint when you brought them in. And the men were up on charges, and the girlfriend testified, all of a sudden her memory was missing. You'd end up paying her as a witness, and you ended up losing the case anyway.

C: Were these American girlfriends or Japanese?

W: No, no. Japanese. This is all that you have to put up with.

But we had every kind of crime you can think of going on and a

few others. We would have these long charge sheets. Now, I was

lucky on this because you drew on a certain number of people from

outside your command. For instance, all the members of the courts

were assigned from the commands on the base. They didn't

necessarily give you their best material. Not always. But, I mean

this was always a problem. We had an aerographer's mate 3rd class from the meteorology section, which had about 20 officers in it, who was a graduate of Northwestern School of Engineering and had had one year of law school at Northwestern. But he was enlisted because he didn't want to go in the Army, and he wanted to fulfill the minimum amount of time required. So they made him available to us full time. That was the nicest thing that anybody ever did to help. He drew up all the charges and specifications under my supervision.

C: How large was your staff?

W: Well, we had about 30 Japanese girls who typed literally letter to letter, who did not know what they were typing in English. But, you see, you didn't have copy machines or anything.

C: Oh, I know.

W: And we had this big section of Japanese women who were making copies of all these legal materials—court records, etc. We had, probably, about 10 to 12 enlisted men, yeomen. They didn't have the legal specialty in the enlisted ranks in those days. But they did—some of them took shorthand, some of them did it by this steno machine.

C: Oh, dictation.

W: Yes, some of them had that.

C: Dictaphone.

W: Yes. Well, they had that—a machine set up on legs you see in some of the courts, where they're using just letters instead of sentences, you know. But they were the ones who were recording these courts. We had five special courts going at all times. We kept referring cases to them. And whenever they could get together, they would meet to take up case after case after case. And don't forget the trial and defense counselors were engineers, mostly from the ship repair facility. I mean this is a real problem. It was tough because I mean these people with the best intentions in the world weren't—

C: Weren't prepared to do this kind of work?

W: Weren't prepared to do this kind of work.

C: Exactly. Did you have any other women on your staff, professional women?

W: No.

C: No, you were the only one.

W: In addition, to the military legal matters which for me included the initial legal review of the special and summary court-martial records, prepared for the Commanding Officer's signature, the legal officers were involved in legal assistance to the military members and their families in any time available after the military duties were accomplished. This involved powers of attorney, general and special, processing of various legal papers for sales of personal property and real estate back in the USA, and also legal advice on various situations. There were always many requests for contracts of installment sales for cars, guitars, etc. I was usually able to talk them out of such arrangements because at that time in Japan, there was no way to legally enforce the conditions in such contracts.

June 25, 1996

C: This is the third oral history tape with Commander Louise Wright. Today's date is June 25, 1996, and she's continuing with her assignment in Japan and Yokosuka.

W: We were on staffing?

C: Yes, we were talking about the staffing, and you were the only female there in the legal office.

Yes. As I said, the group of WAVE officers who were in Yokosuka when I arrived had moved to Kamiseya, and I was the only military female on the base at that time. Then Commander Almira Davis, who had for five years had charge of the WAVE boot school at Great Lakes, in return for her five years of duress had been--I think she went to the Psychological Warfare School; I don't know what name that school had--but anyway she was involved in that sort of thing at Naval Forces Far East. She reported in, and LT(jg) Olive Meining also reported in to Naval Forces Far East. This is after NAV FOR FAR EAST had moved to Yokosuka from Tokyo. So that meant there were more then on the base. As I think of it, they were the only ones then. They had a lot of women in what they called the field research unit of the Far East Command. Now whether or not that was CIA I don't know. One of them was later the head of the WAVES, but she was there in civilian clothes and it was not generally known that she was out there. But I don't

ever remember seeing her out there. We became friends later, but I never discussed this part with her. So there was a whole group who kept to themselves. They had quarters outside the base.

C: It sounds like a secret mission then.

W: Yes. Well, we had a lot of those missions scattered around. As I say, there were women there, but they were in these various capacities—civilian. Red Cross, for instance, a lot of Red Cross, and one of them became a very good friend of mine. At the last year we lived across the hall from one another when I was living on the base, and we did a lot of things together. We went up to Tokyo and got Pernod at the embassy, U.S. Embassy, in Tokyo—you couldn't get it in Yokosuka—and things of that type. Parties. And all the rest of it. A lot of the Red Cross. But those were the only ones. And then as I say, Almira Davis and Olive Meining came in. As I recall, they were the only other military that were there when I was there. I'm sure after that it expanded.

C: But this was kind of unique, that you were some of the first women in the Far East from the Navy. Would you say that this was the most interesting or exciting assignment in your Naval career?

W: Well, as a different sort of thing, yes. The only other thing to compare with it was the Congressional Information Office,

which is a whole different ball game, too. That in its own way was something that you don't run into very often.

C: It sounds very interesting.

Speaking of Captain Hancock and all, she came out while I was still at Fleet Activities, Yokosuka. She came out on an Inspection tour, and it was at the end of her Naval career. She'd been the head of the WAVES for several years then, and I had charge of taking her around for three days. They threw a party, a lunch party, for her from the command. I took her around to see the various activities. This was before the group had moved to Kamiseya. It was relatively early in my stay out there. We got together. She wanted to talk to the WAVE officers alone, and she was having a hard time getting rid of the male officers who didn't seem to realize that she wanted to talk to us alone. Or maybe they did and were making sure she didn't. But anyway, at some point along the line she very nicely excused herself and got us alone. And the question was sending enlisted women out to Japan. And we were all against it because we felt that the kind of competition that they were going to run into with what was going on with the Japanese girls and the Navy men was a difficult thing. I don't know any way around this anyway because.... She assured us that she felt the same way.

About five weeks later one of the yeoman said to me, "I saw a WAVE in the mess hall today." I said, "It can't be. There

aren't any such people." Etc., etc. "I know a WAVE when I see one, and this was a WAVE," he said. So I said, "Well, I'll find out." What had happened was they had set up an information center in Tokyo, and all the armed forces were to furnish women to staff it—enlisted. And the Navy couldn't get out of it. And I think they waited until Captain Hancock was in the Far East and out of the way, and especially since she was near the end of her tour, and they then proceeded with the transfers. They weren't in Yokosuka, though. They were up in Tokyo and had just happened to come down to Yokosuka visiting, and that was how we happened to know that they were in Japan.

C: How things happen, yes. Interesting. Was there anything else you wanted to say about this assignment as legal officer before we go into your job as legislative liaison?

W: Yes, we had some interesting contretemps. One of the interesting things was that when income tax time came around in '54. They brought in all the legal officers, Navy and Marine Corps, they could lay their hands on from Japan and Korea to a session in Yokosuka with people from IRS, since we were all going to have to counsel people on income tax. They were going to give us a lot of information. Actually, it was a very practical thing to do because, for instance, for one thing it would never have occurred to me that a nonresident alien wife could not qualify for joint submission of a tax form. And we had not only the

Japanese nonresidents, but we also had German nonresidents who had never really settled in the United States long enough to get any kind of status. So at least they told us that this was a problem that we would never even have thought of. I mean you wouldn't think to look into the fine print that says a nonresident wife doesn't qualify for a joint submission. But they did tell us that what we could do—and where this is in law I can't even imagine—that they could use them in a head of the household category, which is a kind of a halfway in—between.

But they gave us some practical information. For instance, at that point, the business of estimating taxes and paying ahead, nobody worried about it so long as you could pay at the final submission. Nobody cared whether you'd paid anything in between. And that was still true, and they affirmed that for our purposes. In other words, the legal requirements weren't enforced. I'm not crazy about taxes.

C: Income taxes.

W: And I certainly wasn't crazy about this. I remember one of the boys, one of the yeoman, in the office came to me and said his wife was running a business back home, and he was happy to know this was going on because she could send all her stuff out to us to take care of. And I said, "Listen, you get what you pay for. Do you know how much you're paying for this?" I said, "Somebody's running a business, you'd better pay to get tax

counseling from people who know what they're doing."

C: Right. Yes.

W: I mean this other thing was just simply as a counselor to help out in general, but certainly not to get into--

C: Details, yes. Trying to take advantage. Well, you finally ended up in the United States after this in Washington, D.C.

W: Yes, I came back on the <u>Daniel I. Sultan</u>, the queen of the fleet.

C: Oh, really!

W: I did not fly back. Unaccompanied officers were supposed to fly, but I had had it with <u>Kit Carson</u>.

C: Oh, you took the long way back.

W: I took the long way back. It was about ten days. Originally they were supposed to stop in Hawaii. But they stopped having the ships go in there because they lost so many troops.

C: Were you the only woman on board?

W: No, no. They had all kinds of families going back together.

C: Oh, I see.

W: The families traveled together back. The women who had gone out with their children alone originally came back with their husbands.

C: Oh, I see.

W: Of course, the fact that some of these people hadn't eaten with their kids since they got out to Japan didn't help matters. See, the Japanese maids took care of feeding the kids. They didn't know what kind of manners their kids had. And it wasn't pleasant. I was in a stateroom with three, I guess it was, Army nurses, captains. And they felt the same way that I did about flying back obviously. But it was kind of funny because one of them went to bed when the ship took off and never got out of bed until she landed in San Francisco. She intended to do this, and nobody could dislodge her. Now, they had told her--

C: Was she seasick?

W: Well, she expected to be. They had told us we had to be out of our cabins between eight and eleven to give the stewards a chance to get in and clean. But she wasn't having it, and they

fought the battle and lost.

C: Well, didn't she have any meals?

W: Well, I guess some of her friends brought her meals. I didn't bother with that. If she wanted to stay in bed, it was okay with me.

C: Well, that's kind of different.

W: But they did not stop in Hawaii because, see, there were a lot of troops on this ship as well as the families and the others. And as a matter of fact, there was a whole detachment of prisoners coming back, some of whom recognized me. They weren't supposed to take them—they had to take them over the decks to get them to mess, and they weren't supposed to do that when anybody was on deck. They were supposed to clear the decks before they brought the prisoners up. But they didn't do this, and they recognized me. It was like being an old buddy.

C: So where did you finally land when you came?

W: We landed in San Francisco, but we spent a whole extra night out there because there was no dock space for us to come into. We just sailed up and down the coast. Those who had radios could tune them in to hear stateside radio stations.

C: And you were headed for D.C. Was your husband in D.C. at that time?

W: Yes. He had been transferred there a couple of months before.

C: So you would meet up again, and that would work out.

W: Yes. He had picked up a car in Detroit on his way back, which we had paid for out in Japan. That was supposed to be a good deal, but it turned out not to be. So I had to head back to D.C. to pick up that car to go up to Maine to see my mother and father. By that time it was evident the marriage was crumbling. Fortunately, being a legal officer, when he picked up the car, I had paid for it. I gave him power of attorney to pick up the car and to register it in my name. Consequently, when we split up, I just took the car, which replaced the one that I'd taken out to Japan in the first place.

When I arrived in the US from Japan in 1954, I was under Temporary Duty orders to report to BuPers for further assignment. That was the preliminary we all went through before being assigned to Congressional Information. We all had to be interviewed by Ira Nunn, the Judge Advocate General of the Navy, who made the final decision on the assignment. Before the interview I met the Captain whom I had talked to on the phone before going to Japan. He told me he knew I was finally in the billet, and for that reason took his time about ordering a

lieutenant commander replacement which was what the billet called for. That officer finally arrived after I had held the position for nine months, and I became his assistant until the end of my tour in Japan.

C: Well, you ended up in D.C. And you had a job as a Navy legislative liaison to Congress, which sounds kind of interesting.

W: And it was--very.

C: What were your duties there? What were you assigned to do?

W: My duties were to track the various pieces of legislation that affected the Navy through the Congress, through the committees, through the floor action, through the signing and the executive part. And to keep the Navy informed of every step of the way.

C: Were you working with a team of people?

W: Yes. There were two of us that worked the Senate side, and three worked the House side. At the Pentagon, the head of the office organized the reports from us into an information sheet, circulated throughout the Navy in Washington. She was assisted by me and two officers, a civilian secretary, and a WAVE yeoman.

C: So you met a lot of important people, politicians.

W: Yes. We dealt almost entirely with committee staff members. We met them, the politicians, mostly in elevators. If they were waiting for elevators, they had the option of emptying the elevators and riding alone with the elevator operators, or of letting others ride with them.

I got the assignment by being transferred to BuPers on temporary duty. And then I was interviewed by the Judge Advocate General, Ira Nunn, before I was assigned to the Judge Advocate General. All the WAVE officers went through that routine before assignment to our section. Of course most of the people in that Congressional liaison spoke in Southern accents, which is understandable considering the makeup of the Appropriations and the Armed Forces Committees at that time. So how they happened to get me in there—But they had to have a little mixture. It was interesting because at that time when I came for that interview, I met the captains whom I had heard of and talked to on the phone, the ones who did not think I should go out to Japan as a legal officer in the first place. But who seemed comfortable with the idea that that's how it ended up anyway.

C: Was your team partner another woman or a man?

W: Oh, they were all women.

C: Oh, they were! It was all women who were doing that!

W: That particular part. The Congressional Information officers were all women.

C: Interesting.

W: There were two other branches of the legislative liaison type of thing. One of them was the drafting branch for Navy legislation. The other one was the liaison which worked directly—they had an office up in the House Office Building, the old House Office Building—they took the requests for information from Congress and ran them through the various bureaus to get the answers to go back to the Congressmen. This was the direct opposite of what we were doing. We were taking the information from Congress and bringing it back to the Navy.

C: I see. What aspects of the job did you enjoy?

W: Well, I loved seeing how government worked. Boy, this is the only way to really know it. You couldn't find out reading about it, at least not well. Actually, to see how it works, we attended as many committee meetings as we could get in. Those were mostly in the morning, and the sessions were in the afternoon. Of course I got there after the 83rd Congress, I guess it was, had ended. I got there in the fall. And when it started in January for the new

Congress, which had been elected in that fall, the first few months they had no committee meetings. The House or the Senate would meet at noon, usually for an hour, in which people had a chance to speak about anything they wanted to, and then they'd adjourn. At that time I was trying to learn as many of them as I could. I had to learn in a hurry because we had 96 in those days. That was before Alaska and Hawaii became part of the USA. So it was 96 for the senators. But there were a lot of senators to learn, and we learned them from sitting in the front row of the gallery whenever they met. And we were peering over to see these people. And then finally when they started committee meetings, then we were seeing them from a different level, and we didn't see all their bald spots and that kind of thing. Had to learn a different identification from eye level.

C: Right. Another method of identifying them. Were there any drawbacks to the position as legislative liaison?

W: Well, at first there was a financial drawback to it because quite frankly we weren't being paid all that much in those days. And we were making phone calls to the Pentagon. If there wasn't a session going on, if we were just calling from committee meetings in the morning and then getting to our office in the afternoon, we might make as many as two or three calls. But if we also had a session of the full Senate going on, we were expected to call back within 20 minutes. The two of us, for instance, would be in

the gallery. And then one would be always at the phone, and the other was still tracking the floor action. And we were expected to call back at 20-minute intervals. And this mounts up. It was only ten cents in those days, and maybe it was 50 or 60 cents to a dollar. But you just do that day after day.

And it wasn't just that. Eventually when we were going to floor action in the afternoon and the evening, we had to get back to the Pentagon by cab, and we were paying for our own cabs. Now, the cabs were about as inexpensive as you can get because of the zone system in D.C. But even so, this sort of thing can really mount up.

C: Oh, yes.

W: It wasn't until after the first year— As a matter of fact, what happened at that point was they split off this Congressional section from JAG. It became the Office of Legislative Liaison, which was on a par with the public relations office; their office was on the same level of activity. And when they split off and they set that up, they set that up under another admiral, Admiral Stephan, who had been in there as a captain. And then they got all kinds of support in there. And they started refunding our expenses. So we kept track, and we put in an accounting of what we had spent, and they started reimbursement. You started feeling put upon after a while.

C: That's right. Yes, you do. Because it was an expense to you. What was your rank at that point in time?

W: I was a lieutenant.

C: Well, you stayed in that job I guess for about three years, didn't you?

W: Three years. Three years.

C: That was quite a tour. And then next you were assigned as assistant to the CO for women in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

W: Well, the title on that is assistant for women, to the commandant at the Fourth Naval District at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.

C: So you had to move to Philadelphia at that point in time.

W: Yes.

C: And just what were your responsibilities during that threeyear assignment?

W: Well, the orders read that I was to report for duty and for additional duty as assistant for women. Because that assignment

had to be made by BuPers. But it meant that I could take any job there that was open. Now, my predecessor, who had left-- I had had trouble on this because Congress lasted longer that year than it had before. In those days they used to get out in the summertime. But it had gone beyond Labor Day, which was unusual. And the woman I was relieving had already left, which made it a little difficult on some levels. And when I got there, the question was should I have the job that she had had? Now, she had been an administrative assistant.

There's a problem with that in a situation like that because the commandant has a long-time secretary who also has a title administrative assistant. And she's like a tiger when it comes to protecting her turf. The assistant chief of staff for administration was one of these JAG captains that I had met in Washington. As a matter of fact, I think he was the one I had talked to on the phone when I was trying to get out to Japan in legal. But he was there in administration, and I had known him from JAG from the year that I was attached to JAG before we separated. He was a kind gentleman, and he told me I could have whatever job I wanted. Now, the assistant chief of staff for personnel there was a captain named Sublett, who had been the operations officer for Commander Fleet Activities, Yokosuka. I'd known him from Yokosuka. I wanted to get into something to learn something different. The administrative part, this was a nebulous sort of thing, and especially under those circumstances. I wanted to learn personnel, and this seemed like an opportunity. He had

open billets. So I went. With the blessings of the JAG captain that I had known in Washington, I did take the assignment as enlisted personnel officer for the district detailing all of the enlisted in the district. We were given the names of enlisted from BuPers, and we assigned them to district activities. We had NAS Lakehurst and NAS Atlantic City that was open at that time as an air station in New Jersey. We also had the whole of Pennsylvania, mostly reserve training centers. But we also had Ohio, and Delaware and half of New Jersey.

C: That's quite a responsibility.

W: Yes.

C: Quite a territory, too. So you were responsible for assigning these people.

W: Yes.

C: Did you like this job?

W: Yes, I thought it was very interesting. It was kind of painful because there were always shortages. We spent an awful lot of time arguing with Commands about shortages. Fortunately, they closed Atlantic City after I'd been there about five months. And we had all the people from Atlantic City to disperse through

the rest of the district. But the trouble was, for example, that, you had aviation storekeepers that you were going to have to assign to non-aviation activities, and this is difficult for them.

C: Oh, yes.

W: Most of the Atlantic City gang wanted to go to Lakehurst, but they all couldn't go to Lakehurst. Several of them had to go out to Ohio, and that made them very unhappy. I can understand that.

C: What can you do?

W: There was nothing you could do about it. You do the best you can. It was a hardship on the people, no question. Because of the fact that I was assistant to women, I was supposed to be watching out for the women in these places. And the main body of enlisted women were at Atlantic City and Lakehurst, as well as Philadelphia. And so I made trips over there to visit and inspect and all that. We also had a detachment at McGuire Air Force Base. There was a Navy squadron there, transport squadron, and they had a lot of enlisted women there. So I went over to see them and had kind of an interesting time. The women Air Force officers were lovely. But they had a problem with our people because our people insisted that they wanted to make the beds the Navy way, not the Air Force way. The only trouble was they didn't remember what the

Navy way was. Needless to say, I didn't either. The Air Force women officers were perfectly content to do whatever they wanted, if anybody could tell them what it was.

C: What were the concerns of the enlisted women?

W: Oh, I think it was just a matter of they were kind of out of their Navy. They were with Air Force in that particular place.

C: But I meant the concerns of the enlisted Navy women in general.

W: You've always got a problem with assignment to a degree. But also the living conditions in the barracks in Philadelphia were not the greatest. As a matter of fact, I'm sure I saw an awful lot of stuff on the ceiling that shouldn't have been there, like asbestos liner and a few other things, which, of course, had not come to the front as a problem in those days.

C: Oh, no.

W: But we had a problem in Philadelphia because for some reason the CO of the Receiving Station did not want any women officers assigned there. And I don't know how they could get away with this, considering everything, but they had been able to. As a result, there would have to be assigned a woman officer from one

of the other activities on the base, collateral duty, to the Receiving Station to be in charge of the WAVE barracks. Now, this is a lousy way to do business, believe me. And it caused all kinds of trouble. But they had an in with BuPers that allowed them to do this. The interesting part of this was that the legal officer at the receiving station was an old friend of mine. He was a classmate from law school. He had been the legal officer on Phib Group 3 staff in our last year out in Japan, and his wife had been out there with him. And they were friends of mine from the Boston area. As a matter of fact, the first night I was in Philadelphia I'd stayed at their house before my furniture arrived. They were living in Drexel Hill, and I lived up there, too.

C: Oh, you did.

W: Yes. That was where I lived. So I had an in as far as talking to people, and he was helpful on some occasions on this problem. He knew what the problem was, but there wasn't much he could do. Something to do with the commanding officer. And at intervals there was no one assigned for doing anything about it. And the kids always wanted inspections. They wanted to keep the place up. And they'd call me, and I'd go over. I had people telling me not to go near that place, but they didn't quite dare make it official.

C: Louise, I wanted to ask you what your rank was when you were sent to the Fourth Naval District in Philadelphia.

W: I had been selected for lieutenant commander in 1956, in about September or October. But in those days there was always a long delay, and sometime during the winter or spring we got the examinations or substitution with correspondence classes out of the way, and the physical examination. But then it was a matter of waiting for the numerical time to come up, however they did that. And in the meantime, I was transferred to Philadelphia. The WAVE Detail Officer would have preferred that I go there as lieutenant commander, but this didn't work out. But I received it two or three weeks, I think, after I arrived up there.

C: So that wasn't too long of a wait for that rank.

W: No.

C: What did you like about this job in the Fourth Naval District in Philadelphia? What were the pluses and what were the minuses of this position?

W: The plus on the job was the fact that I was pretty much my own master as far as the way I conducted the Assistant for Women part of it. Because I would decide it was time to go down to Lakehurst or Atlantic City if I hadn't been there for a while.

And I could send out a notice that I was coming. And I'd take off and go, and I could take care of things like that. I don't recall ever consulting the admiral about anything. I mean I set the policy. I set the uniform reqs for the changes of seasons for the women. That sort of action. And I did my own thing. The second admiral I had, a very nice man named Charles Lyman, called me up one day to tell me that the skirts were too long. And so I told him I thought that was a carryover from when they were too short after World War II. So when I next wrote a note down to the powers that be in Washington, I said, "Oh, by the way, the length of the skirts up here, think they're supposed to touch the calves," meaning the calves in back of the knees.

C: Battle of the hemlines.

W: Yes. That was the only time he called me over for that particular type thing. He called me over for other things connected with what I was doing, mostly personnel. For the women it was pretty much separated. And the only other time I went over to see him I had a call from Washington, from the head of the WAVES office, saying that Captain Quick wanted to come up for a meeting with the officers and do a little inspection along the way. And would I get in touch with the admiral. This is a Friday afternoon. I'm in another building from the admiral. I don't have any idea whether he's around or anything else. But I called over, got the dragon lady who administered for him, and she let me in

to see him. That was the only time I asked her to, and she did it. And I got in and said that I'd had this call that Captain Quick would like to come up. And he said, "Oh, fine." He got on the phone to Washington. He called her up and invited her to stay at his house, and it was taken care of right like that. And the dragon lady said to me later, as I was leaving, she said, "Boy, that was interesting. He's calling down to Washington." I said, "Yes, they want to see her."

C: So did you have anything to do with her visit when she came?

W: Well, yes. I picked her up and escorted her around, took her to the admiral's house, and took her to the various things that were going on. A couple of the pictures that were in that folder that I brought up were the admiral and Captain Quick and the rest of the officers who were there.

C: Yes, I'll have to identify those because I've got them in the folder, and I wondered who those people are. So remind me to do that. What were the drawbacks to your position? Were there any there, the minuses at all, in Philadelphia?

W: Well, there's a certain amount of pulling and hauling. When I arrived there, there was a John Barry Day Parade--that seems to be a big thing in Philadelphia.

C: Oh, yes.

W: And the WAVES were marching as usual. They were always marching. The WAVES in the barracks only comprised approximately a platoon. And it was really a rotten deal because every parade that was coming off on a holiday like the Fourth of July or Memorial Day or anything else, they were always detailed to it, which meant they lost all their holidays. And I, finally, went to the admiral's aide, and I said, "This is a lousy deal. They have to take leave to get a national holiday, and I don't think it's right." And you know there are aides and there are aides. Some of them are terrible, and some of them are wonderful. And I had a couple of good ones in Philadelphia and New York, and he just said, "I'll take care of that one." Because they were always asking the WAVES-- They'd be having these picnics as well as parades for the Fourth of July, and the WAVES were always so forthcoming and all that. And it never occurred to them that they were--

C: Taking their holidays from them.

W: Yes, taking their holidays from them. So you had things like that. When I got there, they had this John Barry Day Parade, and the problem was that there apparently was a shortage of relatively junior WAVE officers. And I don't know why they should have been detailed to take the troops in the first place, but

they had detailed the chiefs to do it, and the chiefs were saying, "Chiefs don't march." And I said, "Since when?" This was a good way to arrive in Philadelphia, get the chiefs on your side right off the bat. And there was all kinds of chipping the teeth. And those particular chiefs were that way all the time, and that was it. That was a real annoyance and a failure of leadership, whether on my part or theirs I've never really figured out.

C: They didn't want to cooperate anyhow.

W: They didn't cooperate, that was it.

C: Well, that's unfortunate. Do you have anything more to say about this assignment in Philadelphia?

W: Well, one other thing that had something directly to do with these chiefs was the fact that they had set up a deal whereby a destroyer escort that was doing reserve duty would take the WAVES out for their annual WAVES' birthday party. And they cut the cake on the destroyer escort instead of doing it in some shore activity. And I thought this was a real good deal, this was a little different. Those people didn't go on ships very often.

C: That's right.

W: Well, you should have heard the screaming and hollering.

We're not going to have our regular birthday, this, that, and the other thing. And we had to have them sign up in advance to find out how many we were getting. And it was easy to see it wasn't shaping up. And I was in touch with the WR over at the hospital, Medical Service Corps, and she was having the same trouble with their troops over there. And I thought, well, I'm not going to let this thing go down the drain. Oh, and the chiefs were leading this little battle, too. So I had a brainstorm. I called up Bainbridge because I had been in and out of there a lot. The boot school had moved to Bainbridge, and I had met the exec down there. I called her up and I said, "Do you have any platoons or companies that would be going on liberty? We've got a ship that's going out for the WAVES birthday." This would be Saturday. "And would you be interested in sending anybody up?" Sure they would. This is all done on the telephone.

So I knew that I had to have the names of the people that were going on this trip, and I would turn them in the day before the trip started. But I now knew that I had a lot of people going on the ship. So Friday afternoon comes, and Bainbridge had sent me the list, so I was all set. And I took it over to public affairs, and the roof fell in. Because they had figured, and had even been talking about canceling, this event because they didn't think they were getting anybody. Of course nobody had asked me who'd I have or anything like that. The chiefs had volunteered that information.

C: Who you'd scared up.

W: And they had even accepted a group of American Legion people that had asked to go on a trip and put them on this trip. And now I had two bus loads of WAVES coming up from Bainbridge. They called my house before I left early that morning, about 6 AM, to tell me that the buses had left Bainbridge. It was about this time that I'm starting to get the picture that I have a tiger by the tail.

C: Well, how far out were they going on the ship?

W: Well, just down the Delaware.

C: Delaware River. That's what I would think. Yes.

W: Yes.

C: Not out to sea or anything.

W: They had two bus loads. And so this set a fire in the public affairs office. Actually, they were very happy about it. But what made them mad was that they didn't know enough about it in advance. But they got a hold of all the television people in Philadelphia, and they had coverage on all the newscasts. They had pictures of them going aboard. And when I got down to the

ship, the two buses were there. So I went up to the petty officer in charge, and I said, "Have they learned how to go aboard a ship yet?" And she said, "No." I said, "You'd better teach them in a hurry." And so they went aboard and saluted properly, and they came aboard and left the same way. I had pictures of, which I don't have anymore—they were sitting on the guns, they were all over. They were draped all over the ship. It was a real success story, really.

C: Oh, that's good! That's great!

W: Of course one of the things I hadn't figured on was the fact that they had to be fed. But once they had the count and the names, the receiving station for once got off its rump, and there were all box lunches that they had put aboard. And as I understand it, they contacted Bainbridge later for an exchange of funds to cover it, and that was it. So it was all done by telephone. And I never found out whether anybody was jumping up and down and screaming in the background. See, it was an advantage to being the admiral's assistant, because they weren't quite sure just how far I could go.

C: Right. Or whether this had come from the top or what.

W: Yes. They weren't going to uncover their butts for it.

C: Well, that's interesting. Kind of a first: Women on board ship. One of the first anyway. Well, your next assignment was in New York City at the Eastern Sea Frontier from '60 to '62.

W: Yes.

C: Can you tell me what your position there was and your responsibilities?

W: Well, I looked at my orders, and all they said was for me to report to Eastern Sea Frontier. But I know I was up there as personnel mobilization planning officer. And it was done deliberately by BuPers because they were sending a woman because every man they sent up was detoured into something else. So they figured if they sent a woman up, they couldn't do that. Well, they didn't know Eastern Sea Frontier.

C: One of my WAVES was there in WWII; she was a communications officer.

W: It was such a big thing in WWII. By the time I got there they were down to about 50 officers and less than that enlisted, just a few radiomen, quartermasters, and aerographers. And yeomen. Of course you have to push the paper through somehow. But it was pretty much skeleton. And actually all they really had was the Early Warning System. They had the ships out that notified

everybody of planes approaching the coast or whatever. And the admiral of Eastern Sea Frontier was really the head of the military branch of the U.S. government at the U.N. He was double hatted. He spent his time up there, and he'd come down maybe once every two weeks or something. Most of the time his material was sent up by office messenger for his signature. We didn't see very much of him.

C: So it was a small command, more or less.

W: Yes.

C: And were there any incidents or any amusing or interesting things that happened during your tour there as personnel director?

W: Well, the toughest thing that happened was somewhere in the middle, after I'd become assistant chief of staff for administration, acting—Because my predecessor had left, and BuPers was not going to send a relief in early on because we had let him go without a relief, which is always a no-no, and BuPers doesn't like this—so they were taking their time about sending a replacement, and of course I got the job, and I was designated. They started taking—And I don't recall the exact time frame of this. It was before the Cuban Crisis, but evidently they felt they had a crisis on their hands, and they were taking ships out

of mothballs. They were all going to private shipyards; they weren't going to the naval shipyards. Mostly down South. And the way they had set it up--and the only way I could think that we were connected with it at all, was that we also were double-hatted as the Atlantic Reserve Fleet Command, as well as Eastern Sea Frontier. And we got into the act because of that. But what they did, they set it up for the officers to report by letter to Commander Eastern Sea Frontier.

Now, a lot of these places did have some Naval installations; and a lot of them didn't. They were reporting to various cities, and their orders read for them to report by letter to Eastern Sea Frontier upon arrival. You get some very interesting letters this way. You know, I'm in a hotel. What do I do next? This was not set up properly. I think that they should have been directed to report to the commandants at whatever districts, because they were closest to the action as far as trying to round up these people. Because we didn't know. We could have lost somebody for years in this business in this little shop. And of course we had to send the endorsements back when they reported for them to get on payrolls and everything else. And I wasn't letting them get away with just sitting in hotels. It was kind of fun in a way because you never knew what was going to come in, or who was where and why. So the Cuban Missile Crisis came up at about that time. And about that time my husband was out on the West Coast, and I had put in for transfer to the West Coast.

C: Did you marry another Naval officer?

W: Yes. In Philadelphia.

C: Oh, in Philadelphia. Okay. Oh, we kind of missed that one, but that's okay.

W: Sorry.

C: That's all right. So he was on the West Coast when you were in New York.

W: Yes. He retired—he was stationed in Washington, DC at the time. Because I had met him in Washington before I left, and that was one of the reasons I went to Philadelphia. The detail officer had called me from BuPers and suggested that I stop in someday to talk about my next assignment. And so I was over there the next day. And we had a little discussion about the fact that I had a boyfriend. And we discussed the advantages and disadvantages of Norfolk versus Philadelphia, and Philadelphia it was fresh-caught Lieutenant Commanders were going in as assistants for women to the commandants in the Naval districts. And she needed one there, so that was that. Actually Philadelphia's closer than Norfolk. So that worked out very well.

So, yes, we were married in Philadelphia, and he retired from the Navy after that. And he took a job first in Stamford,

Connecticut. He was an aviator. So that was when I transferred to New York so that I could live in Connecticut. We bought a house in Connecticut, and I commuted into New York from there. He then took a job with Sikorsky, and had been sent out on loan to United Technology in Sunnyvale, California, south of San Francisco. He had been sent out there to write proposals because he'd gotten into this thing on human factors for a private company when he was first retired. He'd gotten used to writing these proposals. He was originally on loan from Sikorsky, but decided he wanted to stay out there. Well, that was over my dead body because I don't happen to like the West Coast.

C: Oh, you don't.

W: No.

C: But you went out there eventually, you did.

W: Yes, well, I went out. Kicking and screaming I went out there. But I was alone on the East Coast when the Cuban Missile Plot crisis came up. And there I was commuting to New York everyday, wondering whether I'd be sleeping, you know, at nighttime and go back to Connecticut and all. That was a very tense time.

C: Oh, yes. I'm sure it was.

W: But anyway it all passed, and off I went to the West Coast.

C: And you went to Treasure Island from '62 to '64.

W: Yes.

C: Where you mentioned you were head of the admin department, director of military personnel?

W: Yes. I started out as director of military personnel. Then they had a reorganization out there and changed things around, and I kept my title at personnel, but I also took on the head of department of administration. By that time, though, my husband was—they lost the contract out on the West Coast. He was transferred back to the East Coast after I'd gotten there. We had been there a year. We were just renting and had just managed to sell our house in Connecticut.

C: Oh, dear.

W: So one of the United Technologies branches--I've forgotten now which one of them; it was not in the Stamford area.

C: Hartford? Otis Elevator?

W: No, it was--

C: Hamilton Standard?

W: It was either that or there's another one up near Farmington.

C: There's some in Middletown, Southington. They were around East Hartford.

W: They were all over the place, yes. But he was transferred, and he went back to the East Coast, and took one look at the—
They were hiring, thinking they were getting the contract. He took one look at the proposal and knew they weren't going to get the contract. And I said, "Get the furniture moving." It was on his orders before anything happened on this. And, of course, shortly after the furniture moved, he didn't have a job. So he rented a house and did something that he had done when he moved to Stamford first before I got there, and that was he rented a house, and he had our furniture, and then he took in all these bachelors who were being hired by these companies whose families hadn't arrived yet. And they all would pitch in and pay the rents and for the food and all that kind of stuff. And so that's how he kept himself busy at that point while I was working my way to get back.

Now in the meantime, while I was at Treasure Island, the commanding officer there was Edward Spruance, Raymond Spruance's son.

C: Oh, yes! Son. I just got a call from--

W: He was a lovely man.

C: Oh, tell us about him.

W: He was a lovely guy. He was so full of fun. His father came to the War College before I left, of course.

C: He was president.

W: I know.

C: Did you see Raymond Spruance here?

W: I used to see him walk down by. He walked in front of our office every day. At wintertime or summertime, no overcoat or anything, and Mary had a joke about that because she was friendly with his aide whose name was Sam Something-or-other. We used to watch him. The sidewalk was too narrow, so he walked in the gutter while the admiral slowed down. And we knew that Sam, who was a Southerner and was suffering, because he didn't feel he could wear an overcoat while the admiral wasn't. And finally we watched and watched, and finally he put a coat on—the aide.

C: Yes, the winters here are bitter.

W: But, of course, Admiral Spruance had an aura of being very much reserved. Of course, I always admired everything I read about him, including -- I was fascinated because it had occurred to me as I watched--saw pictures of--our troops flying into Atsugi, what would happen if they took them prisoner as they arrived? And it wasn't until much later that I read that Admiral Spruance had the fleet outside of Tokyo Bay watching for any signs of pressure or anything else while the signing was going on on the Missouri. I was glad to know that somebody had thought of doing something about that. But his son--you knew that he had to have a tremendous father because Edward was a completely irrepressible individual. He had a tremendous sense of humor. He was just the right kind of a quy to head a school's command. Now this particular school's command had radar schools and electronic technician's school. And they also had the damage control school for the West Coast. There were over 4,000 or so students there.

C: Wow! That was a big outfit.

W: Yes, about 400 instructors and about 200 staff there to take care of it.

C: Did you ever socialize with him and his family?

W: Well, we had the parties and various things that we had like that. And then we had a pretty much open door as far as going in to discuss things. And he was a pleasure to deal with. His predecessor had been a very nice guy, but quite different, more reserved. But we thought this guy was tremendous.

C: Oh, that's great! I just got a call from Spruance's grandson.

W: Oh!

C: Not Edward's son, but his sister's son, Del Bogart, who lives over in Jamestown.

W: Yes, I've seen her name in connection with what Trinity or--

C: Well, her daughter ran Trinity Rep.

W: Oh, it was the daughter.

C: Her daughter, Anne.

W: Okay. Yes, that's right. Yes.

C: She doesn't run it anymore.

W: Yes, I know that.

C: But they're out in California, Margaret. And the son is over in Jamestown. He works in Providence. And he's going to bring

over a scrapbook of Raymond Spruance to add to our collection. So that's interesting that he was your CO.

W: Well, he was a doll, and he was so funny. We used to get a lot of magazines that came in. It was mostly for the troops, but they came into the various departments. And, of course, they didn't all come in at once. They came streaming in. And the ones that were coming into my department, I never went to lunch. I just stayed in at lunch time to watch what was going on with my officer people coming in for service, and I would read all these magazines there. This was a range, from <u>U.S. News & World Report</u> to <u>Field & Stream</u>, you name it.

C: Sure, the gamut.

W: And I had always read a lot of magazines, but never the range that I had here. Well, apparently everybody else was doing the same thing through the school. And Captain Spruance said one time he was in a party, and they were playing a game in which they had pictures taken from magazines of all these people to identify these celebrities. And everybody else was getting maybe three or four out of ten, and he was getting nine or ten out of ten because he was reading all the magazines. He said it was kind of embarrassing.

C: Well, that's interesting. So that basically was your job out

there?

W: Yes.

C: Personnel and head of admin department.

W: And it was quite routine, you know. Unfortunately, whenever they had pass in review for graduating classes, the unassigned officers that were—there were about 20 of us, and I happened to be the senior member of this little group because most of the others were assigned to schools and marched with their schools—and we used to gather on the side in a couple of rows. And, as the senior, I was always on the right in the front row. And if the captain decided to come over and look at us, then I was the one who called them to attention. Other than that, we stood there for the whole 45 or 60 minutes. And in the wintertime it's tough because in the winter the officers didn't wear coats, overcoats. This was standard, and it got very cold there in the wintertime.

C: Oh, sure. You're right, down there.

W: And all my uniforms were tropical worsted, which doesn't do much for heat.

C: Yes, it's damp in California and hot in the summer.

W: Yes. And you know tropical worsted is wonderful because they throw off wrinkles like mad. It's beautiful. But they're not warm, and oh, boy!

C: And you'd need that. Well, do you have anything more to say about this assignment before we launch into your last position?

W: No. As I said, my husband was back on the East Coast, so I had to get back to the East Coast. So I put in for transfer, and this was the only time I paid my own transfer. Before that they would pay it anyway, even though they were moving me at my request. Which was all right. I certainly couldn't fault this. And they gave me the orders that—They read funny because it says, you go on leave, and if you choose to report in to the new Command at the end of your leave, okay. This is the only way. They can't tell you to report, because if they do they'll have to pay you.

C: Oh, I see.

W: So they word it this way. I have the copies of the orders; they're right there. They're written-- It's strange unless you know what the background is on it.

C: On that, yes. So you were sent to Com Three as director of reserve personnel in New York City.

W: Yes. Well, that's the job I landed in. And I was relieving
Lieutenant Commander Dotty Williams, who had been in Intelligence
at Com Four when I was there. This is another thing, too. We ran
into a lot of the same people all over the place. After you've
been in for a while, you were seeing old friends and all that.

C: Sure, it was a smaller Navy.

W: Yes. And she had the education training section, a small section. Gives exams and that kind of thing. And she left right about the time I arrived. And actually I knew that they hadn't made up their minds. They talked about what I'd been doing in California, and I assured them it was 4,000 students and 400 instructors, etc., etc. Then they decided to give me something more than the education, and that's when they gave me the reserve records section. But the problem was that at that time— The first week I sat in in the education department while they were making up their minds about this. In the meantime, I knew that I was in serious trouble physically because I had had a couple of biopsies done at Philadelphia for breast tumors.

C: Oh, gee.

W: And just before I left--as a matter of fact, my husband had come out to fly back across country with me when I left San Francisco--a lump had appeared, and there was no way that I was

checking into a hospital out there. Because if I had, I'd have been stuck. I would have lost the transfer. So I had to come back East. But as soon as I did, as soon as I reported in, which I did right away, I went immediately to the dispensary because I knew 90 Church Street like the back of my hand. And two weeks later I was at the St. Albans Naval Hospital, and it was cancer.

C: Oh, dear.

W: That was the end.

C: So did you resign the Navy as a result of that?

W: No. I finessed them, or they finessed me; I'm not sure which. I knew that they didn't worry too much about whether or not you had gone before a physical evaluation board. Or let's say they would screw it up enough not to know what the left hand and the right hand were doing. And so I had decided—I was within a year and a half or so of what would have been my time to retire anyway because 20 years of commissioned service, if you're a lieutenant commander, is the end. And so I figured I might as well finish off that, because then there wouldn't be any question about going out on a temporary physical disability and then being found fit for duty. It would be easier to finish off the 20 and then go before P.E. boards, so I did it that way. And the doctors, since they don't know anything about personnel regulations, they went

along with it, and I went back to work. So a year after this I decide, well, it's time for the board to look at me. And so I called up and said I would be due for a regular yearly physical.

C: Oh, so you didn't have an operation then!

W: Oh, yes I did.

C: Oh, you did!

W: It was established it was cancer.

C: Oh, okay.

W: I had—the breast was removed, which was standard in those days. And then they found out that it had gone into the lymph nodes, which, you know, made it much more serious. At that point they were going to go back in to remove the ovaries to cut down on estrogen. And I said at that time, "Well, you're going to have to put me under, aren't you?" And he said, "Yes." And I said, "How about taking off the other breast?" Because I had had problems with both breasts, and I had done a lot of reading on this. I knew the statistics were that if you had had it in one breast, there was one chance in ten that you'd have it in the other breast unrelated to the first one. And the odds were too bad already to take a chance on that. So I said, "Well, while

you're at it, why don't you take the other breast?" And they said, "Well, we wouldn't have suggested that." This is one of these things that they don't think they can lean on ladies too much or what have you. "But we think it's a good idea." So they did, ten days after the first operation.

C: Gee!

W: Went back in and had the rest of it. So then a year later I said, "Well, I think it's time we looked into this." And then when they looked into it, I said, "I think it's time to go before a P.E. board." Which they hadn't been thinking of by that time. So they were going to send me to a P.E. board. But they didn't get the paperwork done. And in the meantime, I had been sent to the hospital, and I was attached to the hospital from July on, and into November and December. But as soon as I had finished with the physical, I'd gone back to work. While their charts showed me as being in the hospital, they knew I was at work every day. So nobody was putting up a fuss about this. But once a week I would have to go over there, and it was at St. Albans, which was a long trip away from--

C: Yes, Long Island.

W: Yes. And I had to go over there to get my living-out chit renewed. And every time I arrived there, it was as if they had

never seen me before. All week they forgot all about you, so they'd sign another chit. And this went on for week after week after week. Then all of a sudden they got a new exec in who had to approve all these chits. And he said, "Who is this woman who is--?" And they said, "Well, she's at work, actually." And he said, "I don't care whether she's at work or not. She's showing on our charts." And he said, "Get rid of her." Which meant that they would put me before a P.E. board. By that time my physical was too old, so they had to run another physical. They discovered I had thyroid trouble, so they had to go in and operate on the thyroid.

C: Oh, no! My God!

W: And they finally got rid of me.

C: Oh, yes, on a medical.

W: Yes. Actually it turned out-- We were fighting a little battle about percentages on this because--

C: But you had your 20 years?

W: Yes, I had my 20. So that was all taken care of. But the point we were playing was according to the rating thing that's used by both the V.A. and the military, if you had cancer and it

has metastasized, that's 100 percent. We don't fool around about it. But because of the fact that I had not gone before a P.E. board within a year's time, somebody decided that this no longer held. Which is not true because the V.A. gave me 100 percent when returned. I got a V.A. rating just in case. But we were fighting the battle. We were doing a little business of appealing from one step to another. And I thought, well, you know, one of these days somebody's going to find me fit for duty, and they're not going to be happy about this. So I went down to Washington to talk to—they assign you counsels for these; it's done at a distance by letter. But they assign counsels, so I went down and had a little chat and decided that I would accept the latest finding and not go any further. And I went out just about the time I would've gone out with the 20 anyway. The 20 was already in.

- C: What year was that that you retired?
- W: That was 1966. I went out the first of May or last of April.
- C: Nineteen sixty-six. Okay. How did you feel about leaving the Navy?
- W: Well, you know, I hated to. But with this cancer thing hanging over me, and I had been given a very grim prognosis, at that point I was thinking too much-- Of course, this is another reason I stayed on active duty because it did give me something

to do without sitting at home thinking about the cancer.

C: Right!

W: You don't have too much time to think about it while you're at work, and it worked fine for that. But it was weighing on me heavily because I didn't know how much time I might have or anything else. And you reach the point where this has come to an end, and that's it. But I had had my time, and I had a wonderful time in the Navy.

C: And it was time to leave. Where did you settle after you retired?

W: Well, we were living in Norwalk, Connecticut, because where we had lived before we went to California, we'd sold the first house, but we bought another house, also in Norwalk. But at that time we didn't particularly care to live at that end of the state. And we'd been interested in boating. My husband had become a partner in a sailboat with a couple of other men. And we liked it so much that about the time I retired, we'd bought our own sailboat, a big steel hull sloop. Mercedes-Benz diesel engine. Slept six. Beautiful. Absolutely gorgeous boat. We happened to get a good buy on the thing. And then the question was, we'd done all our sailing then at that end of the sound, which isn't really an awful lot of sailing, and we wanted to go somewhere where the

sailing was better, which was obviously up this way.

So after I retired, we put up the house for sale. We did a fast paint job through the inside of it and put it up for sale. Then we sold it and moved into some rental. We took a year's rent on a place, but within a month we found what we wanted in the New London area. See, my first mother-in-law still lived in New London, and we were still friends. And so we used to go up and visit her. She lived in Waterford. She had a house, and she had a 100-foot beach.

C: So that's how you ended up in that area of Connecticut, eastern Connecticut.

W: Yes. We went up and stayed with her while we went househunting, and we found the place over in Groton that we wanted, and so we bought it. The landlady was nice enough to let us out of the lease. She was able to get a hold of somebody who'd been looking at the rental at the same time we were.

C: Did you work at all after you retired from the Navy?

W: No. Except for the business up at the capitol in Hartford, in the legislature.

C: That's kind of interesting. You are annotating, you said?

W: Annotating the statutes from— The <u>Connecticut Law Journal</u>, which has the Supreme Court and the Appellate Court decisions on various cases. And I take the citations from those cases either the constitutional sections or the statute sections, and make cards up wherever anything is cited. And then if there's something that seems important, writing a sentence or two about what the decision is. And these all appear right after the sections of the individual statutes in the book. They're updated every time the statutes are republished, which is every two years.

C: And you're volunteering to do this now.

W: Yes, well, you know if you don't use it, you lose it.

C: That's right. Absolutely. You did get involved in politics, too, in Groton, didn't you?

W: Yes. I was elected to the town council twice. I was on two Charter Revision Commissions. Of course that's what really started me in. I went on the first one, and then they decided to run me for office. I'm really not an office-runner, but somehow or another I got involved and did it. And then I was on the town committee for most of the ten years. And my local representative got me into the Legislative Commissioners Office because they hire extras to help out when the legislature is in session.

That's how I got involved in that. And I've done a little bit of everything. I did a little drafting of statutes and did a lot of proofreading. And it was a change, it was something to do, and it was only three months one year and five months the alternating year. And it kept my brain functioning.

C: Sure, and active in your field, in the field of law. To get back a little bit to the Navy, I want to ask you some general questions about your career as a whole in the Navy. How would you say you were treated as a woman officer in the Navy? Did you ever experience any harassment, any discrimination on the basis of jobs assigned, promotions, or just general treatment?

W: Not under the terms that they use these days about what harassment is or what sexual harassment is or anything else. And I've talked about this a lot with my contemporaries. And I would say in general we were on something of a pedestal. In the days when we first went in the Navy, we were treated as such, and we did not relinquish this position for equality, and I think it saved us a lot of grief.

C: That's interesting.

W: We were a little bit more untouchable than they are now.

C: So you were well treated.

W: Well treated. But I ran into a couple of small items towards the end of my stay here in Newport. We ran into a problem in which one of the male chiefs was circulating—Mary and I got involved in this—was circulating a rundown on the fact that we had no authority to issue orders. Now this was kind of understood that any orders we were issuing were in the name of our unit boss, whoever, who was always a man at that point. But they had these little escape clauses, to the effect that in certain circumstances, yes, you could give orders. Obviously when you're left in charge, what do you do?

But of course now, there we were alone, because by the time I left there and for the year before I left there were only three of us taking that watch. So it was a 24-hour watch, and we could get some sleep upstairs in the operations department, where they could reach us in case that they had to get us. But we had charge of that section, and we could not have this going on. By that time Captain Pennypacker had left; he would have put this down in a hurry. And he'd been replaced by a mustang lieutenant. But we went to him and said, you know, "Either you're going to take care of this, or you're going to be standing watch for 24 hours a day for the foreseeable future because you can't—" There were three of us, and we were all women. "You can't leave us in a situation in which we have no authority." So he saw the light, and he called the chiefs in, and knocked some heads around.

C: And that ended that.

W: That ended that.

C: I think there was some resentment against taking orders from a female, obviously.

W: Oh, yes, I'm sure of it. But some of these people were fairly ignorant about. They didn't seem to be able to weigh what was going on.

C: Right. The protocol of it, the necessity of it. Do you feel that you had more opportunities in the Navy than you would have had in a civilian setting?

W: Absolutely. My thought all the way through was that they gave you a job to do and expected you to do it. Now, I can't think of any nicer way to do business. To a certain extent, of course, in a coding room you've got a lot of people watching you to start with because there are so many places you can go wrong. But once you prove out on that, there is no problem. And they never hesitated to assign you to these individual things. When I think of some of these investigations and all that I was assigned to, you're earning while learning and vice versa. You just go ahead and do the best you can, and this is what they're expecting me to do. And I certainly didn't see this with my contemporaries who were in civilian life. This isn't the way they were running things in those days. And I don't have anything to compare with

it now even.

C: Yes. Did you feel there was a lot of camaraderie among the women officers in the Navy during that time?

W: Yes, there always was. There's a special bonding about the fact that you put yourself on the line.

C: Have you maintained friendships with other women officers that you've met over the course of time?

W: Yes. My friends now consist of my old college friends who have been my friends for years and years and they've been the women that I've met in the Navy. And there's a gal, using the term loosely, that had the issuing office in Boston when I went there. We became friends. She married and left the Navy; she was a reserve. At the time she had three boys that she brought up, and eventually—she was out in Ohio, back in her home state—and eventually went to work at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base when they were first training people for computer programming and stuff like that. And she became quite a power. She was in one of the first training classes when they were getting into that. And she became quite a power in the Air Force at Wright-Patterson, doing that particular type of work and traveling all over the United States. Now after her husband died—and this is typical of what happens—we've been traveling together ever since. Started

with WAVE conventions which I was already going to with another group. And then when her husband died, and she indicated she was interested, we started going to these things, and so we go traveling once a year.

C: Oh, great!

W: We meet out in Ohio, or she meets back here, or we meet at the place of embarkation, and off we go. And it's true with others. One of the gals that was with me in the Congressional Information thing lives out in Seattle. And she spent quite a lot of time over in Massachusetts here. Her husband, who is retired Navy, was working on refurbishing the nuclear power plant over at Plymouth. That was under fire for a long period of time. There was a retired admiral who had a consulting crew out on the West Coast, who brought them over here. For years at a time they were living over there. And the husband was flown back twice a month I think it was to Seattle. She was flown east two or three times a year to stay with him for a week or two at a time. And I would meet her. First of all, I went over and stayed with them over in Plymouth. But after that, when she'd come east, I'd meet her at the Officers' Club down here, and we'd go off for a day's jaunt in and around Newport. She had gone to OCS in Newport when it was there at the time. I went on a cruise through the Panama Canal two years ago, and who do I run into on the ship but my friend, who is with a classmate of hers from OCS who lives in

Massachusetts, and they were on the trip.

C: Just by accident.

W: Yes.

C: Do you belong to any WAVE organizations?

W: I always went to the national conventions that they had. They started at 5 year intervals and then broke them down into an inbetween one and even on the 2- or the 3-year mark. They stopped that after the 50th mark. There was a problem with— The gal who had been running the show was having trouble getting a certain amount of cooperation around the place. And she had run about four or five of these conventions. She finally decided to call it quits. Now the WAVES National have started that.

C: They're having one in Boston next year.

W: That's what I understand. But my problem is that the group that we'd started down in New London seems to have faded out of the picture. I can't find them. But what happened on that was they initially started that after a convention out in San Francisco that I attended. And I had been among the original members—this was a very loose sort of thing, mainly publishing a quarterly, and they ran into difficulties when they first got

organized, and disappeared from sight. And then they finally got themselves regrouped. The members of WAVES National went to the regular WAVE conventions, but they also ran their own at various places, and I understand, at Boston now. They have become pretty well organized. Now, the one up in Boston is Old Ironsides. But the Southeastern Connecticut group is the Ripples, not as reassuringly strong. They came after me with great force to try to get me to join. I would have been willing to join, but at that point I belonged to a local branch of my national sorority that I'd belonged to in college. And they were having trouble keeping afloat.

C: Oh, I know. So many are.

W: It's a problem because they're expected to do so much by the home office, and you only have ten or fifteen people doing it, and it just doesn't work. And I had initially not wanted to, but finally did get in. But once you go in, even though you tell them that you'd be glad to help support their numbers but you don't want to do any work, nevertheless it doesn't work out that way. And eventually I'd broken off from that. And I didn't want to get started in WAVES National on this because I thought the same thing was going to happen. Then when the other one went south, I thought, well, at least I can go to their conventions, and I kept looking in the newspaper. When they first started the group, they had wonderful publicity. They had some gal that was really

cranking the stuff out. Disappeared from sight. I don't know whether they're still organized or not.

C: I don't know. You'd have to write WAVES National to find out.

Can you sum up your Naval career for me? What was its

significance for you and for your life?

W: Kind of hard to put into words.

C: It is. It's a tough question.

W: Of course, when I went in, I had no idea that I would ever make a career of it. It just wasn't in the cards. But as it turned out, it was. I found a way of life that I liked. I liked the people in it—the high ones and the low ones and the medium ones—that much more better than I liked a lot of civilians, to put it bluntly. The camaraderie was a—and it became my family. I would never have been able to go out and not be living close by to family members without belonging to an organization like this. The idea of going out to work for a civilian company, I can't even imagine it.

C: You're left more on your own.

W: Yes.

C: But this way you have a social network and a group; I think that's important.

W: You get a network. And, as I say, the ones I'm in touch with now are those two different groups--my college friends and my WAVE friends.

C: Have you contributed to WIMSA at all? The Women's Memorial down in Arlington? You've probably heard of them and been solicited by them, I'm sure.

W: I've heard of them. And a friend of mine, a WAVE, had some ideas and went to see who was handling it and was not impressed. I really meant to make a contribution, and I never did.

C: Yes, because they're building a memorial to women in Washington, D.C.

W: Yes.

C: Well, I want to thank you very much for your comments on your naval career, not only the WAVES in World War II, but when you rejoined again in 1949, and your very unique specialty in the law. And we'll have this transcribed as soon as we can, and then you'll be able to edit it, and we'll make a final transcript.

W: Yes. Thank you very much. I think there was just one thing--C: Oh, sure. Do you want to add something?

W: --that was the promotion I had to lieutenant when I got a spot promotion in 1946. That wasn't covered. And that was the year where they decided that they were losing too many trained people in communications, and they needed to promote some in. Of course they didn't ask you whether you'd stay in without this advance. So naturally you go for it.

C: Sure.

W: And I got it. Now, I know up in Boston they did not put them in for it. The powers that be up there decided they didn't like the idea, and they didn't implement it. But Captain Pennypacker was agreeable to it, and two of us from communications— Mary hadn't arrived at the time that this was done—two in communications and one or two up in the operations office, WAVES.

C: That's great.

W: And it was just an extra little thing.

C: Oh, it helps.

W: All of a sudden after being a j.g. for about nine months or

so, I'm wearing two stripes, you know, and that's nice.

C: Speedy, yes. The result of wartime. Well, that's very good. Thank you.

[End of Interview]

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