

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE WAVES

HISTORY  
OF THE  
WAVES

NO. 40

MURIEL TWEEDLY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

1996

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

INTERVIEWEE: MURIEL TWEEDLY

INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

DATE: MAY 31, 1996

C: This is the first oral history with Muriel Tweedly, who lives in Lincoln, Rhode Island. My name is Evelyn Cherpak. I'm the curator of the Naval Historical Collection at the War College. This is "The WAVES in World War II Oral History Project." The interview is being conducted at her home. Muriel, I'm glad that you consented to be interviewed for our program on the WAVES in World War II. And I'd like to begin the interview by asking you where and when you were born.

T: I was born in Brownwood, Texas, December 6, 1923.

C: What did your father do for a living there?

T: My father was a civil engineer.

C: And what did your mother do?

T: She was a housewife.

C: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

T: Two sisters.

C: Were they older or younger?

T: Older.

C: You were the baby of the family.

T: Yes.

C: Did you spend your growing up years there?

T: Yes, I did.

C: Did you graduate from high school?

T: Yes, I did.

C: And what year did you graduate?

T: 'Forty-two.

C: So the war was in full bloom then in 1942.

T: Right.

C: Did you decide to work after graduation?

T: Yes. I was going to go to college. But then when the war started, I just kind of gave up that idea, and I went to work at the Air Force--the primary--Air Force base that was in Uvalde, Texas. Because we had moved to Uvalde in the meantime. My father had gone to work for the Texas State Parks Board, and he was building state parks. And he built the Brownwood State Park in the town where I was born, and he built the Uvalde State Park, which was named Garner Park after John Nance Garner, who was living in Uvalde.

C: Oh, he was?

T: Yes.

C: Oh, how interesting.

T: I've got pictures of him with my family.

C: Oh, that's great! Did you graduate from Uvalde High School?

T: No, no, I didn't. I went back and graduated from Brownwood because they didn't have--when I went to Uvalde--they didn't have the courses that I needed, and I would lose several of my credits. So I went back to Brownwood and graduated. I could have graduated in January, but I decided to go on and finish in June.

C: In June of '42.

T: Yes.

C: Well, you were working for the Air Force. Do you know the name of the Air Force base?

T: It was called Hangar VI (or Garner Field).

C: Oh! And what were you doing for them?

T: It was a civilian-run air force base. It was a primary base for the first cadets. We had cadets from West Point. We had cadets from foreign countries. And that was the primary, you know, the first--the very first--introduction to flying.

C: Oh, that those people would have.

T: Yes.

C: And it was not run by the government?

T: No, it was civilian-run, but there was a commanding officer and many other officers. Only the base itself was run by civilians.

C: Oh, isn't that interesting.

T: Yes.

C: I never heard of that. What did you do for them there? Were you in the office?

T: First of all I worked in the post exchange for the steward. And then I went into the bookkeeping department, into the payroll department actually, and I also worked a PBX switchboard at times.

C: How long were you there?

T: I was there from-- Let's see. After I got out of high school--in May--I think I went to work for them in June, and I was there until I went into the Navy.

C: Oh, okay. A couple of years then. Did your family have any Navy connections?

T: Just my brother-in-law. That's all.

C: At that point in time.

T: Yes, he was in the South Pacific. He was in the whole thing.

C: Did any of your friends join the service after high school? Did anybody you know, any females that you know, join the service?

T: Yes. The girl who worked in the office with me joined, and that's one of the main reasons why I joined.

C: I wondered. Sometimes friends influence you to join.

T: That and, my dad and I had discussed my going into the service because I had no brothers. And he was too young for World War I and too old for II. So he kind of thought it would be a good idea.

C: So he supported it.

T: Oh, absolutely.

C: And how did your mother feel about that?



T: Well, she wasn't too happy about it. She didn't really want me to go, but we persuaded her.

C: Do you know why she didn't want you to go?

T: Well, I was her baby, and I was straying too far away from home. I'd never really been away from home except when we went on vacations. I'd never been out of the State of Texas except two or three times.

C: So your sisters, who were older, were not in the service, I assume.

T: No, they were both married.

C: Oh, by that time.

T: They both were married with children by the time I went in.

C: Oh, okay. Did you keep up with news about the war before you enlisted in the Navy? Were you aware of what was going on?

T: Oh, yes. We were all very interested. Of course working for the Air Force, you know. I mean the guys that were in the Air Force there were very concerned because they didn't know where they would be going. Of course they went to basic after that, and

then they went to--what the heck was the last one? From Uvalde they went to basic and then--what the heck is the last?

C: Advanced?

T: Advanced. Okay. Thank you. That's the word I was looking for.

C: How did you hear about the WAVES?

T: Well, I had heard about all of the services because I had had kind of leanings toward it. But I didn't want to go into the WACS.

C: Why?

T: Well, I didn't like their uniforms for one thing. And I don't know. But I could have gone in earlier if I had joined the WACS because you had to be 20 to be in the Navy.

C: Right.

T: So I don't know really. I just-- I tell you what happened, how I really decided--this is not very nice, but.... I had a boyfriend I was engaged to, and he wanted to get married, and I did not want to get married. I had seen too much trauma happen with girls that were married and had lost their husbands, or they

came home severely wounded. And I said, "no, that's not for me." So I decided I want to wait until after the war was over. Well, he was pretty adamant. So this girl that I worked with came walking into the office one day, and she said, "Hey, guess what?" I said, "What?" She said, "My husband and I have joined the Navy." And I said, "Aw, get outta here." So she said, "We did." After she left, we knew that she was in boot camp. When she came home from boot camp on leave, she came to see us. And this is about eight weeks later. Something like that. And I thought she looked so spiffy in that uniform. I'll tell you! And I said, that does it. That does it! I'm joining the Navy. So my boyfriend called that night, that very same--well, it was two o'clock in the morning. And he said, "Are you going to come down here or not?" And I said, "No, I really can't because I joined the Navy." And he said, "You did not! You're lying!" And I said, "No, no. I did." The very next day I made my sister go with me, went to San Antonio and joined the Navy. And I had them swear me in right then and there.

C: Oh, you did!

T: And they said, "You know, you have two weeks, and you can change your mind." I said, "No, I'm not changing my mind." I said, "Swear me in." So the officer that had examined me or whatever, said, "Well, we're just about to swear in a room full

of girls." He said, "Are you sure?" And I said, "You bet." So I went down, and he swore me in, right there.

C: Oh, isn't that something! Well, that's an interesting story about why you chose the Navy over the other services and why you joined.

T: Well, I liked the Coast Guard, too. I thought the Coast Guard was pretty good. But I guess I just had a leaning toward the Navy. Of course my brother-in-law was in the Navy.

C: A lot of the ladies said the uniform really attracted them, too.

T: That was a pretty good-looking uniform.

C: It was.

T: I always felt so dressed up in it, with the hats and the white gloves.

C: Did you have a sense of patriotism? Do you think that was a motivating factor?

T: Oh, very, very much. Absolutely. I was very frustrated because I said, boy, if I was a man, I would be in the service.

C: Well, they gave women the opportunity.

T: They certainly did.

C: And now your next step after being sworn in immediately was to attend the U.S. Naval Training School Women Reserves in the Bronx at Hunter College.

T: That's right. At Hunter College.

C: How did you get there from Texas?

T: In a trainload of girls. There were two trains of girls going to Hunter from Texas.

C: From Texas. And do you remember anything about the train ride? Was there anything memorable about it?

T: Oh, yes. Very memorable. It was fun, for one thing. And for another thing, that's how I got my nickname. My name is M-U-R-I-E-L, and that, of course, up here is pronounced Muriel. In Texas it's pronounced Merl. And so they were saying to me--all the girls were saying to me--"Well, what do you want us to call you, Merl? or Muriel?" And I said, "Eh, whatever." So one of the girls says to me, "Okay, we'll call you Mule." I said, "Oh, that's just beautiful." But that stuck like you wouldn't believe. I mean here

I was, five feet tall and weighed about 100 pounds. And then they're calling me "Mule."

C: Oh, isn't that something. So did that stick in the boot camp, too?

T: Oh, yes. All the girls that were with us were from Texas. Every one of them. When we got assigned an apartment, every girl in the apartment was from Texas.

C: Oh, so they kept you together.

T: And they kept us all together. And it was--I'll never forget the first day that they issued us those cotton stockings and the black shoes, but we didn't have any uniforms. And those navy blue hats. I had a little yellow dimity skirt with an eyelet blouse, and those cotton stocks and black shoes, I was a sight to see.

C: Right. Not a fashion plate at all.

T: Absolutely. We laughed over that.

C: Yes. They were pretty ugly.

T: They were very ugly.

C: Do you remember what your initial impression of New York City and Hunter College was?

T: Awe, I think. It was so huge. New York City was so noisy and so loud, and just busy, busy, busy. And I mean I was from a laid-back little Southern town that had about 7,000 people in it. And it just seemed hustle, bustle, bustle. But I liked it.

C: Oh, good.

T: I thought it was very exciting.

C: Good. That's great. Well, you had a busy time at Hunter College.

T: There were so many people came, like band leaders. And we saw Clyde McCoy, and we saw Erskine Hawkins. I mean they all came to entertain us. And then there was a big parade. We didn't march in it, but I think maybe some of the girls that were ahead of us marched in it. And that was when Roosevelt had come to New York, and was in the--

C: Oh, FDR came to visit--New York City or Hunter?

T: No, he didn't come to Hunter.

C: Right. But he was in the city.

T: Yes, he was in the city.

C: Oh, did you witness that parade, then?

T: We saw it, but we weren't in it.

C: Right. Can you describe your living conditions in the apartment and your roommates? How many did you have?

T: Well, those apartments, they were like a shotgun thing. You know there was one room, and then there was another room and a bathroom and another room. There was only three rooms actually. There was the living room and the kitchen and one bedroom and the bathroom. And we had two double-decker bunks and a table and chairs, which we used as a desk. And there was nothing in the kitchen. The apartments were completely blank except for what-- And there were four other girls in the back bedroom. So there were eight of us in each apartment.

C: Oh, that's great. Did you get along?

T: Very good, very good.

C: That's great.



T: We had one girl in there whose father was in the Army, and he was a colonel or something. She said her family was mad at her because she joined the Navy. But she was pretty well up on military protocol, and she gave us a good background.

C: Right. Sort of an indoctrination there.

T: Yes, what you can do and what you can't do.

C: Do you remember the kinds of classes you took and how your day was structured?

T: Lord, let's see. What did we do? I know we went to classes.

C: Right, right.

T: And we marched-- You know they drilled us in marching. And we learned the military--oh, the names of all the Navy divisions, you know--compact this and all that stuff. Then we had calisthenics. And we marched and marched and marched. And went to the mess hall, and went to bed about nine o'clock.

C: Did you like the marching and the drilling?

T: I loved it! I absolutely loved it!

C: Why did you love it?

T: It was just such a good feeling. And they were playing "Colonel Bogey" and all the good marches and everything. And we really liked it.

C: Did you have a review every Saturday morning?

T: Every Saturday there was like 2200 girls lined up in front of Hunter College.

C: And you all had to march.

T: And we all had to march.

C: A kind of regimental review.

T: And there were people from all over the Bronx watching us.

C: Oh, really! They had the locals standing by.

T: Absolutely. They were great.

C: Oh, isn't that interesting. Did you like the discipline of military life?

T: I didn't mind it at all, not at all.

C: What did you think of the food?

T: Yeeech! Does that answer your question?

C: You didn't like the Navy chow?

T: Not at boot camp. Not at Hunter. It was horrible. I told you we called it the Spam Palace.

C: Oh, you did.

T: Oh, God! We had Spam I think every other day. I lived on packages that my mother sent me. But they also had a baker's school there. And we had beautiful, delicious bread, and butter, and we had real butter. And I lived on bread and butter and milk and the packages from my mother. I couldn't stand it. Of course I was kind of picky at that point. I usually had a really, really good appetite. But when I got in the Navy, I wasn't used to that kind of food.

C: Yes, it was different.

T: I was used to fried chicken, you know.

C: You said Spam and macaroni.

T: Spam and macaroni. Oh, my God!

C: Oh, dear. Did you participate in any extracurricular activities? Some of the girls mentioned there was a newspaper and a singing platoon.

T: Well, we used to--the girls from Texas there in that particular room--used to put on little skits. And we had this girl from Texas City, and she and I used to sing. And we used to sing "San Antonio Rose," our most requested song. And that was fun.

C: Was that for your own amusement?

T: Oh, that was for our own amusement. Oh, yes. That was for the girls, anybody that wanted to come.

C: Right, right. Kind of a little presentation there. Do you remember whether or not it was mandatory to attend church services on Sunday morning?

T: I believe it was. I'm not absolutely sure about that. But I think it was. Yes, we went to an ecumenical service. The Catholics had their service, and the Jewish girls had their

service. But we had, everybody else, all the Protestants, were lumped into one big huge--

C: Yes. I know that you did have a little time off on the weekends. I think they gave you from one o'clock on Saturday to eleven.

T: We had one liberty when we were at boot camp.

C: Complete liberty?

T: One liberty. And that was on the last weekend. And we went, and we were terrified that we were going to be late.

C: Where did you go?

T: We went-- Well, see now, I had met some other girls, and one of them was from New York City. Well, she was from Brooklyn. And she took us around and just showed us some of the other parts. But we came back early because we were absolutely terrified that we were going to be late. And they had made it sound like we were going to be boiled in oil and strung up at daylight if we were late getting back.

C: So you had a chance to see some of New York City.

T: Oh, yes. We got to see quite a bit of it.

C: Did anything amusing or interesting or outstanding happen during your six weeks at boot camp?

T: Not at boot camp. I think anything that would be interesting happened after we got out. And mostly when we went on--well, not on active duty--but when we went to school.

C: Right. Okay. When were you actually at Hunter--time frame, month and year? It was '44 we know.

T: Yes. July and August. And then we had a leave. We got to go home. And then from there we went to yeoman school in Oklahoma.

C: Oh, okay. So you went home first.

T: Yes.

C: Do you remember how you coped with the heat in New York City during the summer? Did that bother you?

T: No, not at all. It didn't bother me. I was used to it.

C: Right. Being from Texas. Before you left boot school and Hunter, did you express any preference for the kind of rating you wanted, or the kind of work you wanted to do?

T: Well, yes, I did. I thought I would like to be a radioman. So I went--and they gave us a test. And I don't know how I did. I think I did fairly well. But I decided it was really nerve-racking. It really-- When I thought, God, being responsible for a plane full of people. I turned that down. And then I said I'd like to be a storekeeper or a yeoman, and they sent me to yeoman school.

C: Oh, so you could express a preference, which is good.

T: Yes.

C: Well, after you returned home, after boot camp, and then you made your way to yeoman school. How did you get to the yeoman school at Oklahoma A&M? Did you go by yourself on a train, or with a group?

T: Oh, by myself on the train.

C: And how long were you there at yeoman school? How long was the course?

T: Well, let's see now. It was about four months, I think. Something like that.

C: Well, that's quite intensive.

T: Yes, it was very intense. We had an exam every single Saturday morning. And if one person in your room flunked, you stayed in for the weekend. You did not get liberty.

C: Oh, that's awful!

T: Yes. My girlfriend-- This is where I met my friend from New York, I mean this Jewish girl from New York. And she and I became instant friends. It was just instant rapport. And we had two of the dumbest girls that God ever created in the room with us, and we used to coach those girls. We'd say, "If you don't pass that test, we're going to kill you!" And we managed usually to drag them across.

C: Do you remember the kinds of classes you had to take at Oklahoma A&M?

T: Oh, my God, we took typing, shorthand. I learned all of the Navy departments and what their function was. And it was just crammed into us. It really was intensive. And we marched back and forth to classes all day long.



C: Do you remember what you did for recreation during that time? Did you have any recreation--sports or movies? Did the Navy provide anything for you at Oklahoma?

T: No. Well, we had liberty every weekend.

C: Where did you go?

T: We went down to the little town of Stillwater. And they had this little, little joint called the Purple Grotto, and that was where we hung out mostly. And they also had a big USO that we went to. We went to the USO a lot.

C: And what did they provide for you, the USO?

T: Oh, they had doughnuts and coffee and stuff like that. You know we had the big jukebox, and we danced. Generally just sat around and shot the bull and met guys from all over the country.

C: Yes, I was going to ask you if there was any dating going on, if there were any men around.

T: Oh, heavens, yes. Yes, boy. Lots of good dating. But we could only go on the weekends. And we had one girl, she was 32 when she went into the Navy, which is a lot older than most of us. And she was very blase about the whole thing. She used to stay out until

two o'clock in the morning. We were supposed to be in at eleven, I think. I believe that was the curfew. And she used to crawl in through the laundry window downstairs in the basement. One time she came through, and the door was locked. So she spent the night sleeping on the ironing board.

C: Was she ever caught?

T: No, she never got caught. And you know why? She was so bold. She was just as bold as brass. She didn't really much care.

C: Now, where were these fellows from that you were going out with?

T: They were from the school that was right next door to us. There was a--I can't remember what it was. It's in that book, I think, that I gave you.

C: It probably was Air Force or Army?

T: Yes. It was Navy.

C: Oh, it was a Navy school!

T: Yes. And then there was one at Norman, Oklahoma, too, which was right close. But that book there will show you the Navy school that was right next door.

C: Oh, okay. Well, that's interesting. So that's where you spent your free time. Did you ever go beyond Stillwater and go to Oklahoma City or Tulsa?

T: Oh, yes. We went to Tulsa several times.

C: Oh, I see. Was that overnight or just for the day?

T: Oh, we used to spend the night. We had overnight liberty near the end of the course.

C: Well, you finished at Oklahoma A&M, you said, after a long period of intensive training. And did you have any choice as to where you wanted to be stationed?

T: Oh, yes. We had three choices. And my girlfriend that I had met, we decided that we would like the Brooklyn Navy Yard because she was from Brooklyn. And she said, "You know, we can really have a good time." And the second choice was Jacksonville, Florida. The third choice was Hawaii. Well now, I wanted to go to Hawaii. I was dying to go to Hawaii, but we got Jacksonville, Florida.

C: You got your second choice.

T: Yes, we got the second. Everybody got their second choice. So I said, man, if I'd have known that, I would've put--

C: Jacksonville first and Hawaii second.

T: Right. Absolutely.

C: Oh, wasn't that interesting. So she was a fast friend that you made there, a very good friend.

T: Yes. Very good friend. And we went to Jacksonville together.

C: Oh, you did. Now, what was your billet at Jacksonville and your rate?

T: Well, we came out of school as Yeoman Third. And we went to-- when we got there, first there was a snafu, and they were not expecting as many girls as they got. I think they were expecting something like 22, and they had over 200. So they stuck us in a Navy dormitory, you know, a big--

C: Oh, barracks.

T: Barracks. A big barracks right in the middle of all the guys because that was the only place they had for us. And we lived out of our suitcases for about three weeks while they put cubicles in there. And we stayed there until I guess just before the war ended. Then we were transferred to the BOQ. I don't know what they did with the bachelor officers, but they put the WAVES into the BOQ. And that was really nice, boy. That was great. That was a beautiful thing. And the food, by the way, the food at Jacksonville was very good.

C: So you had to eat on base in a mess hall.

T: When I first got there, of course, I'd be on the night shift. We went to work at four o'clock in the afternoon and got off at two in the morning. And we used to go over to the chow hall at two in the morning and have eggs and beans and everything under the sun. And they used to have chicken and all that stuff. And one time we had chicken, and the seagulls always disappeared on the day we had chicken. So everybody swore they killed those seagulls and gave them to us for chicken. But one time everybody got salmonella. And I'll tell you, that was something to behold. Everyone that ate at that chow hall that particular night had salmonella. And one kid says to me, "I tell you something." He said, "I was going to the infirmary so much, I met myself coming back." Oh, it was awful. I wasn't very sick because once I picked up that chicken and held it to my nose, you know, I said, "Uh

oh!" and I put it down. And I told my girlfriend, I said, "Don't eat that. That chicken's not good." So she and I weren't really too sick. We just got a little bit of diarrhea. Other than that we were fine. But I'm telling you, everybody else was getting bismuth and paregoric--I think that's what they were giving them.

C: Oh, that's horrible.

T: It was pretty bad.

C: What month did you arrive in Jacksonville?

T: January.

C: January '45 you were there.

T: Right.

C: And you were until the end of the war. You mentioned you drew the night shift, four to two. For whom did you work?

T: We worked at Overhaul & Repair. This big, big, big hangar. And we sat there, and we typed those little things they called Egres--there were about five copies on them, all different colors. And each piece of the airplane (they used to bring the airplanes in there, and I guess they just tore them apart) every

piece had to be tagged with something so that you'd know what plane it was on. And that's what we typed. And we had to bang those typewriters so hard for it to go through all the way. And that was what we did for a long time.

C: And how many WAVES were working in that area, doing what you were doing?

T: Quite a few.

C: Quite a few?

T: Oh, yes. It was a huge hangar, it was huge. They even had big vats of acid that they dipped some of the parts in and that kind of thing. It was huge. It was like a city really. And I don't know how many girls were in there, but there were plenty of us. There were four of us in that particular area that were typing those things, just in that one little area. And then there were areas like that all over the hangar where they typed up those slips for different airplane parts.

C: Who was your boss? Do you remember who that was? You must have had a supervisor.

T: Oh, yes. We had an ensign. Oh, God, I can't think of his name. We had a chief who was named Farquehar, I think, or

something like that. Chief Farquehar. He was extremely Scottish, which he never let us forget. But I can't remember the-- There was an admiral, of course, who was the head over the entire base. And then I know we had--(he was a commander or something) who was in charge of the office.

C: How were you treated by the men?

T: Wonderful! Wonderful.

C: Oh, that's good. No problems or discrimination or harassment?

T: Not any that we couldn't take. We gave it as good as we got it.

C: Oh, really. Would you say there was a feeling of pressure or crisis about the work that you were doing?

T: Well, it had to be very accurate because it was going into an airplane. Not really pressure, but you had to be sure that everything was exact. My husband and I got into a little argument-- See, I had just met him then.

C: Oh, where did he work?

T: He worked in the same place.



C: Oh, he did!

T: That's how I met him. That's where I met him.

C: Oh, I see.

T: As a matter of fact, when we had roll call in the morning, I was standing in front of him, and he used to bend behind my knees and make me go down, you know. Very cute. Like high school. But his New England accent. He came into that office one day, and wanted to know if I had seen a little "pot." And I said, "A little pot? What kind of pot?" He said, "Oh, I don't know. It was a little pot about this big." And I said, "Did it have a handle?" And he looked at me, and he said, "What?!" I said, "Did it have a handle? What kind of pot was it?" He looked at me and he said, "I'm saying P-A-R-T."

C: And you thought it was "pot."

T: I thought he was looking for some-- Hey, how did I know? They might have used pots on an airplane.

C: So that's how you met him, while you were at work.

T: Yes.

C: What was his rate, and what was he--?

T: He was an aviation machinist's mate. I don't know. I think he was second class. I'm not sure.

C: And he was from Rhode Island.

T: Right, right. And I was from Texas. And when we started going together, I used to say, oh, God, going from the sublime to the ridiculous.

C: You know you're quite far apart geographically. Did you work on Saturdays at all?

T: Not usually. If there was kind of an emergency, once in a while they would call us in.

C: Did you have liberty on the weekends?

T: Oh, yes. Unless we had the duty. We headed for the beach the minute we got out of the hangar.

C: Oh, I was going to ask you what you did for recreation on the weekends.

T: Well, we lived on the beach. I looked like Chiquita Banana I was so dark.

C: Where did you go on dates?

T: Oh, we went out to eat. We went to the-- The Roosevelt Hotel there in Jacksonville--I don't know if it's still there or not. We went through there, and we didn't recognize a thing, about four or five years ago. Except the park where we used to live after I got out of the Navy--because I got out before he did--we recognized the park. But we went out to the beach, and I'm telling you--

C: It had changed?

T: --we couldn't find anything that even faintly resembled it.

C: Isn't that something!

T: But we used to go over to the beach, and they had--then there were no motels, no hotels, no nothing. There was just a boardwalk, and it was a real old rickety thing, with splinters and everything else. And the houses up there, you know, the beach places where you could stay, were like barracks really. It was awful. But we used to go, and there was one restaurant that we went to a lot out there because they had deviled crabs, and they

were delicious, and I don't even like crab. We used to go dancing. And the Roosevelt Hotel had a big cocktail lounge underneath, downstairs; you had to walk down. We used to go there. And we stayed on the base a lot because they had a beer garden. They had dance halls, they had swimming pools, they had bowling alleys, they had movies.

C: Wow! They provided a lot.

T: Oh, God! You could have stayed on that base and never gone into town and have a good time.

C: Was it a huge base?

T: Very large. Very large. Still huge. Still very active.

C: Did you like your quarters where you were billeted in that barracks situation? How did that work out?

T: Oh, that was fine. I mean at first it was kind of tough when we were living out of suitcases. But when they got the cubicles built, and got lockers in there and two-bunk beds--it was fine. It didn't bother me one bit.

C: You were flexible.

T: Oh, yes.

C: Did you make other women friends when you were there?

T: Oh, good heavens, yes! I had friends all over the country.

C: Oh, that's great! That's great! Did you keep up with the war news while you were in the Navy at Jacksonville?

T: Absolutely.

C: Reading newspapers?

T: And they used to announce a lot of it over the P.A. system. You know, like the invasion of this and Wake Island and all of the details of the war.

C: Oh, that's good.

T: And the Battle of the Bulge, we heard all about that. Or whatever was going on. I'm not sure about the Battle--I've heard all about the Battle of the Bulge, but I'm not too sure. Yes, that took place near the end of the war, didn't it?

C: Yes, it did.

T: Yes, it did.

C: Did you write to your parents and friends while you were in the WAVES describing your experiences, your daily life, what was going on?

T: To my parents, yes. But I didn't write to any of my girlfriends because most of them were either married or living in some other state or in the service.

C: Do you have any of those letters?

T: No, I don't. I don't have a one.

C: Oh, that's too bad.

T: Yes, it is.

C: Because that would be a wonderful source of information.

T: Yes. Well, see, I mean I never went back to Texas to live. If I had, maybe I could have salvaged a few of them. But I don't know what happened to them.

C: Do you remember where you were on VJ-Day, which was August 1945, and what your reaction was to the news that the war was over?

T: We were at work and heard it over the PA system. Everybody went totally berserk. Work stopped. It was just jubilation, that's all. And I was kind of sad because I didn't want-- The sorriest I am of anything in my life was that I never stayed in the Navy.

C: Oh, really?

T: Yes. That really bothered me. I was really sad. I'm only kidding. No, we were all thrilled to death. We just absolutely-- You know the whistles blew, and everybody screamed and yelled. So it was just wonderful. And my girlfriend, the one that was in the Navy with me, was at Times Square.

C: Oh, this was the gal that was from Brooklyn.

T: Right. She was home on leave. And they went to Times Square, and she saw all that folderol. And she had on her white uniform. And somewhere during that hullabaloo, somebody planted a footprint right on the butt of her uniform, which was terrible.

C: Did you go out and celebrate that night?

T: God, I don't remember. Probably. I'm sure we did. I remember they let us out early.

C: Did you ever have a chance during your year in the WAVES to meet Mildred McAfee, the director of the WAVES? Did you ever see her? Did she ever come to a graduation?

T: I'm trying to think. Somebody came. I'm not sure it was McAfee.

C: Or Eleanor Roosevelt, perhaps?

T: No. I would've loved to have met Eleanor Roosevelt. I think I admire her more than anybody, except my mother. I can't remember. I know that there were-- See, they let us out early when we were in Oklahoma. If we lived close enough to get home for Christmas, they let us go. So I went home to Texas. I left Oklahoma A&M on the 22nd of December.

C: Nineteen forty-four?

T: Nineteen forty-four. And it was because I could go home. I was only about two, three hundred miles away from home. So I got home for Christmas. And then I had my orders to report to Jacksonville the third of January. And there was some kind of a-- well, I really don't know for sure what happened. But I was



supposed to catch the train, and my mother and dad took me to the station, and this train came through, and I got on it. And I'm not sure that I was supposed to be on that one or if I should have waited for the next one. But anyway, this thing was full of guys. It was like R&R. They were coming from California and everywhere. And they were all on their way home. And there was me and I think five nurses on that train. And it was so jammed that I had to sit on my suitcase all, well, practically all, the way and then some of them got off, and when they did I finally got a seat. But we got to New Orleans, Louisiana, on New Year's Day. And we stayed there for the entire day. They had just turned us loose, and it was wonderful. We got to see the Tennessee-Alabama game right on the 50-yard line. We ate at Antoine's, and we never paid a dime. Nobody would let you pay anything.

C: Because you were in the service.

T: Because we were in the service. And I had met this kid on the train from Alabama, and we got to talking, and some of my relatives had come from Alabama. And we decided that maybe we were very distant cousins or something. So we went to the Sugar Bowl Game, and of course he was from Alabama, and we just screamed our heads off for Alabama. I think they won; I'm not sure. But anyway, we went to Antoine's, and I swear I think we were the only enlisted personnel in that restaurant. It was full

of admirals and generals and everything. And they wouldn't let us pay for anything.

C: Oh, isn't that interesting.

T: Very interesting. I thought it was wonderful.

C: Oh, of course. There was a lot of civilian support for those in the military.

T: Oh, absolutely. Oh, sure. And we got on that train again about, oh, I guess it must have been three o'clock in the morning the day after New Year's. And I got to Jacksonville January 3rd. Feeling like I'd been run over by a train.

C: What was the highest rate you achieved in the Navy?

T: Just before the war was over, several girls and I went for second class. And I guess we made it. I'm not sure. But the war was over, and we never got it.

C: Oh, I see. Do you remember if you received any medals for your service?

T: No, but I understand that we are entitled to wear some of the ribbons. I don't know exactly which ones, but I could find out. No, I never received any.

C: How long did you stay in the Navy after the war was over? When were you separated?

T: In November. The war was over what--in August?

C: Yes.

T: Yes, I stayed in until November.

C: And then you were separated from the service.

T: I was separated in Memphis, Tennessee.

C: Oh, you were. Do you remember what that procedure entailed? What did you have to do?

T: Well, I remember a physical; they gave us a physical. And it was mostly just signing out, really.

C: Did they give you a ticket back to where you were going?

T: Oh, yes. I went home to Texas first before returning to Florida.

C: And your pay, I suppose.

T: Yes.

C: Did you have any orientation on how to return to civilian life?

T: I don't remember any.

C: Okay.

T: I don't think we had much trouble with that. I mean I know the Vietnam veterans are supposedly having an awful lot of problems. But I don't know, I don't remember the-- I'm sure there were some that were very upset about it. But no one I knew seemed to be having all kinds of flashbacks and all that kind of stuff because we didn't have the--

C: No, you weren't in combat.

T: No, I mean I'm talking about the guys that came out. I mean I never heard of anybody having any problems readjusting. But I'm sure there were some.

C: Oh, yes, there must have been some. How did you feel leaving the Navy? Were you happy? Were you sad?

T: I was very sad. I didn't want to leave the Navy. But I had gotten married, and you couldn't stay in if you were married.

C: When did you get married?

T: November 9, 1945.

C: All right. So that was before you were separated.

T: Right.

C: Where were you married?

T: In Jacksonville, right on the base, at the All Saints Chapel.

C: Now, did you wear your uniform?

T: Yes, I did.

C: Did your parents come?

T: No, they couldn't. My dad was working for the Army Air Force, and he couldn't get off. And neither did my husband's family. But

they sent money, which was great--if they couldn't come, that was the next best thing, right?

C: Oh, so you were surrounded by your friends then.

T: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had a nice little wedding.

C: Oh, that's great. It would be nice if you had a picture of that, too.

T: Yes, I know it.

C: But no picture, huh?

T: No.

C: So you were sad to leave the Navy because you wanted to stay, but women couldn't stay at that time, until 1948 when the Women's Armed Service Integration Act was passed. Did you feel that the WAVES had a strong sense of esprit de corps and camaraderie?

T: Yes. Definitely. We felt we were superior to all of the other forces. At least we did down in Jacksonville.

C: Oh, that's interesting. Did you think that the WAVES was a smoothly-run organization, if you look back at your training and your work experience?

T: Absolutely. Very, very efficient.

C: And organized.

T: Right.

C: Was there anything you didn't like about your job as a yeoman in the service?

T: No. There was nothing that I didn't like. I didn't get to use the shorthand that I had learned, and I mean I lost it pretty fast, because I think that's something you have to use. But I was never called upon to use it.

C: What did you like about your job?

T: Well, I like to type, and that's mostly what we did. And, you know, I think it was probably just as good a job as any. I mean I liked it.

C: Good. Do you know of anyone who was discharged from the WAVES for disciplinary reasons or for pregnancy?

T: I remember when I was at Jacksonville that there was a girl who was--she was an aviation machinist's mate, and she was pregnant. And she used to wear these loose things, you know, like the mechanic's jacket, and no one knew she was pregnant until she was almost ready to deliver that baby. And she got discharged, of course.

C: Right. Of course.

T: But that really is the only one that-- I know there was one girl who was from Marble Falls, Texas, and she hated the Navy so bad. And she just resented everything about it. Why she ever joined, I will never know. And she got a discharge.

C: Yes. I guess there weren't too many people who felt resentment.

T: No, no. She's the only one I knew who got discharged because she hated the Navy. She just didn't want to do anything. I guess she was causing disciplinary problems. I don't know.

C: Was that at Jacksonville?

T: Yes.



C: Okay. Did the WAVES experience change or redirect your life in any way?

T: I'll say! I'll say. I married somebody from Rhode Island instead of Texas.

C: And you came up to Rhode Island then. Did you come immediately after the war was over and after you were married?

T: No, we went to Texas and stayed about three or four weeks with my parents, and then we came up.

C: Oh, that must have been a change for you.

T: A change for him.

C: Right. But a real adjustment for you living in Rhode Island versus Texas.

T: I'll say. Yes, sir. It really was. I hate cold weather, but I did like the snow, the first I'd ever seen.

C: Did you find that the war made you more independent and self-reliant?

T: It certainly did. I was from a little town of 7,000 people and had never been out of the State of Texas except with my parents on vacations. And I learned to-- I got on trains all by myself, and went down on New York subways and all kinds of things. Even hailed cabs. We thought we were really--

C: Oh, yes, quite sophisticated.

T: Oh, definitely.

C: Did you find that it broadened your horizon, meeting new people from different places?

T: Yes, I loved it.

C: Did you decide to work after you were married? Did you have any career ambitions to continue?

T: Well, I did work for five years.

C: After you were married. And where did you work?

T: Well, now, I came up here. My sister-in-law was working at Sayles Finishing Plant, and there were over a thousand people working there, I guess. They were doing a lot of camouflage stuff and stuff for the services. She told me that there was a job

opening in the lab. And I had never done lab work. I had had chemistry in high school, but that was all. And so I went and interviewed for it, and they hired me. I went to Rhode Island School of Design and took a course in Chem Tech and I worked about four and a half years. Then I had my oldest son, and I didn't work for ten years. Then I went to work for Synthron, which was a manufacturing chemist. I worked for them for about 13, 14 years. And then I went to work for CNC--that's the initials, C-capital N-capital C. And they're manufacturing chemists, too. And I worked there for 17 years.

C: Wow! So you had quite a bit of work experience. A good long time, about 34 years then.

T: Yes, I worked in a lab from the time I got to Rhode Island until I retired.

C: Were they all around this area, around Lincoln?

T: Yes. Synthron was in Cumberland. And CNC was in Central Falls at first, and then we moved to Providence. And then they moved from Providence to Woonsocket.

C: What did your husband do after he got out of the service?

T: Well, he went to college, for one thing. He graduated from Bryant. And then he went to McKesson & Robins as a salesman. And then after he left McKesson's, he went to work for Westinghouse. And now he works-- Well, he went to work for Blackstone Supply, which is a hardware supply house. He only works part time. He retired when he was 62, and he's been working ever since.

C: Yes, in a part-time situation.

T: Right.

C: Oh, well, that's good. Did you maintain any service friendships when the war was over?

T: My girlfriend from New York. We kept in touch for, oh, a good ten, fifteen years. And then, I don't know, really what happened. She moved, and I don't know, we just kind of drifted. And I haven't heard from her in a few years.

C: Yes, people tend to lose touch. Did you attend any WAVE reunions after the war? I heard there was one in Boston.

T: No, I never have. But, you know, there's one in Boston just coming up.

C: Right. This is an organized thing.

T: Yes, September. It's a convention.

C: Dot Midgely sent me the info on that.

T: Of course we're having a regional conference in Newport.

C: Exactly.

T: Next year. April 1997.

C: That's next year. That'll be great. Well, you do belong to the Ocean State WAVES.

T: Right.

C: Which was organized about four years ago, I assume, or five years ago.

T: Yes, I'm a charter member.

C: Yes, you're a charter member. Great. What office do you hold in that organization now?

T: Right now I'm secretary.

C: What do you find that's positive or good about the Ocean State WAVES?

T: Well, it's camaraderie. I mean, we really have a good time. And we're very active. We do a lot of things. We just got back from the Cathedral of the Pines. And we have cookouts, and we have pool parties. Installation of officers is always at a restaurant, and we have a Christmas party. And I've talked to girls that are in other units, and they say they don't do anything.

C: Oh, but you're very active then.

T: Yes. We're very active. And I've talked to a girl down in Florida, and she belonged to one of the units down there, and she told me that all they did was have all their meetings in restaurants. And she said they meet, and they just compare notes, and they eat, and then they go home, but there are many units who are active.

C: Yes, it's a luncheon club.

T: Yes. That's about it.

C: But yours is much more active.

T: Yes, ours is much more active. We visit the veterans' hospital in Bristol. We take Christmas presents. We have a member right now that's in the veterans' hospital. She's not very well.

C: Who is that?

T: Her name is Eleanor Hall. I'm not sure what exactly is wrong.

C: Oh, yes. That's too bad. So that's very positive and very good. And you think the women from World War II have a strong bond then?

T: They certainly do. Very, very strong bond.

C: Great, great.

T: And we march in parades. We also do that. When we march in parades, it gives you such a good feeling when you walk. And everybody claps when we go by.

C: Oh, I'm sure they do.

T: And yells at us, you know.

C: You mentioned you went to the Cathedral of the Pines. Was that a memorial service that you went to?

T: Yes. It was for Memorial Day. It was for all the twelve units of New England.

C: Oh, they did!

T: Yes. All of the entire New England units.

C: That's great. If you had to sum up your Naval career, how would you sum it up, and what was its significance for your life?

T: How would I sum it up? Thoroughly enjoyable. And it certainly changed my life because I changed residence. And I don't think I would have--would be the person that I am today if it wasn't for that. I mean I developed a sense of independence. And I mean I love to travel. And hopefully I've taught my kids a lot I've learned. I wouldn't give up that Navy experience for anything.

C: Well, that's great. Did any of your children join the Navy?

T: No, my children were both too young for Vietnam or for any of the other wars.

C: Oh, that's good. Do you have anything else you wanted to add about your experiences during World War II and your Naval service? Can you think of anything else that we can add that happened or was amusing or interesting?



T: Well, one thing that was kind of amusing: When we were at Oklahoma A&M, when we were in the girls' dormitory--what had been the girls' dormitory--and the rooms were very nice. We had wooden bunk beds and a desk, and we had two closets, one you could lock. And you can imagine what that one looked like. The other one had to be spic and span. But we had red floors in that dorm, and they had to be polished within an inch of their life. Well, we used to throw everything in the closet you could lock, and then those floors-- If you walked across them, you could see the footprints. So what we used to do was we used to put our shoes in front of our bunks, and skate around in the room in our stocking feet to keep it polished. And we were at the short end of this long, long, long hall. I think there were two rooms-- You know there was a long section, and then the short end. Well, when we had inspections, they always started at the long end, always.

Well, this one Saturday the lady--what was her name? Captain McGeen? No. What the heck was her name? Captain-- I think it's in there. I could tell you what it is. Anyway, she was heading the inspection. She didn't always. So instead of going the long way, she came down the short way. And of course we were the first room, and there we were all doing the "Skater's Waltz," da dadada da up and down the floor in our stocking feet. Skimming across the floor. And we looked up. And one of the women that was with her, one of the ensigns, yelled, "Attention!" Oh, my God! You should have seen four girls-- So she just laughed, and she said, "I think we'd better start at the long end."

C: So then you had to get yourself ready for the final inspection.

T: Oh, yes. But we got into those shoes, and we stood at attention, I think, until she got down there. She just laughed. She thought it was funny.

C: Oh, that's good.

T: Yes. Thank God!

C: You also had the inspections at Hunter then, too, didn't you, on Saturday mornings?

T: Yes, indeed.

C: White glove inspections?

T: Yes. We had a captain's inspection every Saturday.

C: And at Jacksonville, too?

T: Oh, every Saturday morning, captain's inspection.

C: So everything had to be spic and span.

T: That was the whole entire base. That was the entire base except people that were on duty. They all had to stand captain's inspection.

C: Well, that was something to look forward to?

T: Yes, I liked that, too, because there was marching and all the martial airs.

C: Yes. On Saturday at Jacksonville as well?

T: Right.

C: Well, that's great.

T: We didn't have to go to church in Jacksonville. That was one thing, that was up to you, if you wanted to.

C: Yes, I think boot training was a little more structured; they made you do things. Well, I want to thank you very much for your remarks.

T: You're quite welcome.

C: --on your career. And we'll get this typed up, and send back a transcript to you for editing. Thank you.

T: You can take out all the uhs and the ers and the ooohs.

## INDEX

Air Force Base, Uvalde, Texas, 4  
Alabama, 40  
Battle of the Bulge, 36  
Brownwood, Texas, 2  
Garner, John Nance, 4  
Hawaii, 26, 27  
Hunter College, Bronx, New York, 12, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 57  
Jacksonville, Florida, 26, 27, 28, 29, 34, 36, 39, 41, 44, 45,  
47, 57, 58  
Lincoln, Rhode Island, 2, 50  
Marble Falls, Texas, 47  
McAfee, Mildred, 39  
McKesson & Robins, 51  
Memphis, Tennessee, 42  
New Orleans, Louisiana, 40  
New York City, 14, 20, 21, 51  
Norman, Oklahoma, 26  
Ocean State WAVES, 52, 53  
Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, 22, 23, 26, 39, 56  
Rhode Island, 33, 48, 50  
Rhode Island School of Design, 50  
Roosevelt, Eleanor, 39  
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 14  
San Antonio, Texas, 10  
Sayles Finishing Plant, 49  
Stillwater, Oklahoma, 24, 26  
Tulsa, Oklahoma, 26  
United States Coast Guard, 11  
United States Naval Training School (WR), 12  
United States Navy, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18, 23, 24, 25, 27, 34,  
36, 38, 41, 42, 44, 45, 47, 55  
Uvalde, Texas, 2, 4, 9  
Vietnam veterans, 43  
VJ Day, 38  
WACS, 9  
Wake Island, 36  
WAVES, 2, 9, 28, 30, 37, 39, 46, 48, 51  
Westinghouse Corporation, 51  
Women's Armed Service Integration Act, 45  
World War I, 7  
World War II, 2, 7, 54, 55