

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE WAVES

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OF THE  
WAVES

No. 43

BB FREEMAN DAVIS

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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The History of the WAVES

Interviewee: BB Freeman Davis

Interviewer: Evelyn M. Cherpak

Subject: The History of the WAVES

Date: August 7, 1996

C: This is the first oral history interview with BB Freeman Davis, for the WAVES in World War II oral history project at the Naval War College in Newport Rhode Island. The interview is being conducted at Mrs. Davis' home at 479 Poppasquash Road in Bristol, Rhode Island. I'd like to begin the interview, BB, by asking you where and when were you born?

D: I was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1920. December 14th.

C: What did your father do for a living?

D: He was president of Manufacturer's Mutual Insurance Company; that's currently Allendale.

C: And your mother?

D: My mother was a full time volunteer and the mother of six children.

C: How many brothers and sisters were in this group of six children?

D: I had an older brother, I am the oldest of four girls, and I had a younger brother.

C: Where did you spend your growing up years?

D: In Rhode Island, in Providence, and in Bristol in the summer.

C: Right here in this area?

D: Right here in this special place.

C: Very good. It's a beautiful place to spend the summer. Can you tell me when you graduated from high school, and where you went to high school?

D: I went all twelve years to a Quaker school called Lincoln School, in Providence R.I. I graduated in 1938.

C: And did you attend college after that?

D: I went to Smith College immediately after that and graduated in 1942.

C: What did you major in there?

D: I majored in History.

C: That's a good major, I did, too.

D: Helpful

C: Yes, helpful. Did you decide to work after graduation?

D: I decided to join the Navy, or serve in the service if they would take me. Because it was after Pearl Harbor when I graduated. Everyone, at that time, they cared about our country, was far into patriotism.

C: Oh absolutely, I think patriotism was at an all time high then. Did your family have any Navy connections at all?

D: My family had no Navy connection. My father served on General Pershing's staff in World War I, in Europe.

C: Were any of your friends or relatives in the service at that time?

D: My older brother was in the service, in the Navy, in the Supply Corps and many of our friends were in the Navy as was the

man that I eventually married, although I didn't see him until quite late in the war.

C: Did you know him before you entered the service?

D: Yes, he was a next door neighbor and friend of my brother.

C: Can you tell me how you heard about the WAVES?

D: I just thought it was an opportunity to be in the Navy, and was what I would like to be in, if I could get in.

C: Was the Navy more attractive to you than, let's say, the Army or the Coast Guard?

D: I sound prejudiced but, yes, it was.

C: Can you tell me why it seemed more attractive than the other services?

D: I don't know why it was, it had kind of well, something I admired, clean crisp, not messy, a little more elite. I think that matters. I'm a nautical person, and I think that appealed to me.

C: When did you decide to join the WAVES? And when did you enlist?

D: I applied right after college to join the WAVES. There were quotas then in the various states of the number of women that could be in the first groups of the WAVES officers. And I was in the quota for the Rhode Island one, and then I had an accident with my finger and my enlistment had to be postponed.

C: When did you finally join, or re-enlist again?

D: It took about three months. The quota system opportunity for officers was changed then, but, I wanted to get in, so I enlisted and I was just lucky that it all worked out.

C: That's great. Did you enlist in Providence?

D: I had to enlist working through Boston.

C: Did you have to take tests there?

D: There were certain forms you had to fill out, and applications and all that and be in good health, of course, and the rest.

C: And you were sworn in then?

D: I was sworn in then.

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

D: I don't think so, at that time no.

C: How did your parents feel about your decision to join?

D: They thought it was wonderful for me to enlist. My father had reservations about the enlisting part because he had been in the military himself, as I said, in the Army, and he said it was a little bit chancy when you enlisted in a service when there were no rules or plans at that time to change from enlisted status to officer status. And he figured, as I had been accepted in the first quota I should wait and try to be an officer.

C: He didn't want you to get...

D: He thought that maybe I'd gotten into something that I might regret. I didn't regret it for a minute, but anyway he didn't know that.

C: I guess he didn't want you to get stuck in the enlisted rates for your whole career.



D: It could have happened.

C: Yes, it could have. It did to others. Where were you sent for basic training?

D: I was sent to basic training, I have to look up this date, at Women's radio boot camp in Madison, Wisconsin, October 8, 1942.

C: So you were one of the first group of women being trained.

D: Yes. Actually I was the first group of radio people that they were training as radio people as WAVES at that time.

C: Now what was your training like? What did it encompass? What did you learn?

D: We had to learn typing, and general protocol, like any other boot camp. I remember for typing, our typing class was first thing in the morning. Wisconsin was very cold in the winter, very cold. And our typing class was in the bowels underneath the football stadium. It was a little arduous at times, but we thought Wisconsin was a wonderful place to have boot training.

C: And you were at the university there?

D: We were at the university there, in their dormitories; it would have been Chatworth Hall, I think, I saw it in my old album.

C: How many roommates did you have in your living situation there?

D: I think there were eight in a room with four double decker beds.

C: Did you make any lasting friendships from that time frame?

D: I still have people that are close friends from that time.

C: How long was your training, your boot camp there? How many weeks?

D: I was there until January 27th, so that's about three months.

C: That's a long time, longer than the normal boot camp at Hunter College, when that began in '43. Were you training also to be a radio operator?

D: Yes, we were, Morse Code, dots, dashes. I still think of it once in awhile if I hear something musical other than...

C: Well, dots and dashes.

D: Yes dots and dashes.

C: So you had to learn that as well.

D: Well, you had to, cause otherwise, you couldn't be a radio operator at that time.

C: Right, obviously. How did you feel about marching and drilling? Did you take to that as part of your training?

D: Well, I assumed it was all part of the deal. I'm outdoorsy, and typing, I didn't mind that. I was what was called the right guide, if you know, in the military. If you have people marching, you have all the tall people up in front and all the little people at the back, so they always have somebody up in the right front to set the pace, that has short legs, otherwise the ones at the back are all running while the ones at the front with the long legs are all walking normally. We thought that was quite funny.

C: Did you find your classes challenging, easy or difficult?

D: Frankly, I thought they were not too challenging, but I was in them not to criticize, just to learn, do the best I could.

C: Did you have any time off during this period, this intensive three months?

D: Yes. We had weekends, quite alot of freedom sometimes on weekends, and the people in Madison were very hospitable.

C: Do you remember what you did for recreation?

D: Well, I know we went ice boating on the lake when it was frozen. Other things, we took advantage of whatever season it was.

C: And you were there in the winter.

D: October through January.

C: Right, through the end of January. Did you have a graduation ceremony when you finished?

D: There was a ceremony at the end, that's right. There is a clipping of that in the album somewhere.

C: And then you were off to another duty station. Where were you assigned after radio school?

D: I was assigned to go be a radio operator at the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi, Texas. I arrived there after a train ride from Wisconsin, January 31, 1943.

C: Well, that was deep in the heart of Texas, and an entirely different sort of situation for you. Could you tell me what your living conditions were like there? Did you live in a barracks?

D: We lived in a barracks. We were the first group of WAVES to be assigned to the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi. They were not quite prepared, as the bathrooms were still for males only, urinals, and in the mess hall it was interesting because all the seats were attached to the tables. So it was like sitting astride a horse. And we were all in skirts because only the people who were doing parachute duty had slacks at that time, in the WAVES.

C: So you had to kind of accustom yourself to these circumstances. What was the nature of your work?

D: We were doing, actually taking radio code, dots and dashes, in the radio room, from other air stations and sometimes planes, but we weren't doing traffic control, and we would work eight hour shifts. We would work three days from 8 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon, three from 4 until 8, and three from 8 until

midnight. And then we would have three days completely off. (A 12 day cycle.)

C: What was your rate at that time?

D: I was just plain seaman, then I earned my radioman, third class, while there.

C: Did you have to take a test to pass?

D: Yes, we did.

C: Do you remember what your pay was?

D: I have no idea. No. Can't remember.

C: I assume you worked with other WAVES.

D: We were almost all WAVES, radio operators on a shift at that time. That was one of the purposes of the WAVES, let somebody else go do something they could do at sea while we were on land.

C: Right, who was your commanding officer, or in charge there?

D: We had the head of communications, and the actual Admirals' names I don't remember.

C: But did you have a boss to whom you reported?

D: Whoever was the boss on watch. The senior officer on watch.

C: Did you like this type of work?

D: I thought it was fascinating, something completely different that I had never done before.

C: Right. Did you have a feeling of a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

D: Yes, because you did your job and you hoped you did it well, or else you would not be in the same seat the next day!

C: Was there anything about your job that you didn't like?

D: I don't remember, I suppose there was always personalities, but I don't remember.

C: What did you do for recreation on your time off at Corpus?

D: There were beaches; there were all kinds of things to do. I was fortunate to have a contact with a civilian family that had a house there on the drive along the water. And on our three days

off, we were just like members of the family, so that was a great treat.

C: How did you meet these people?

D: One of my WAVE friends had an introduction to the family.

C: That's great, so you had some contact with some type of a family situation there. Did you date military men when you were there?

D: They were the ones that were there!

C: Where did you go on dates?

D: At that time, you'd go into Corpus Christi, if I remember correctly. The opportunities for dating, I don't remember being very spectacular on the base.

C: Did you keep up with the events of the war through newspapers and newsreels?

D: Absolutely. Because you wanted the war to be successful. And to end as soon as it was possible.



C: Absolutely. How did you manage to transition into the officer corps?

D: Well, I had it in mind, that if the opportunity ever arose, I would apply and see if indeed, I could go, and it happened so I went off to Officers Training School in Northampton, Mass.

C: And you made an application?

D: Made a formal application. You had to do this with your commanding officer, the whole bit, and then when your permission was granted, you were assigned to officer's training.

C: Great, and when was that?

D: I went on the 27th of September 1943.

C: And this was to the U.S. Naval Midshipmen's School at Smith College.

D: That's right. Yes, that's right.

C: And how did you get there from Corpus? Did you go by yourself?

D: I had leave on the way. I took the train. I went from Corpus Christi, Texas in a flight of those small training planes first. Because there was some of my friends delivering six small, we called them "yellow perils", to New Orleans, to the air station there. So I literally hitchhiked to New Orleans and then I got a train to Providence.

C: And then from Providence you made your way up, after your leave, to Northampton. The training school up there was about six or eight weeks, wasn't it?

D: We lived in the college dormitories, and it was longer than that, because if I went to Northampton on the 27th of September, and got my ensign's commission on the 16th of November. Well, that's about six weeks.

C: Can you describe what your day was like at Northampton? What was the routine?

D: Marching around to classes around campus, plenty of marching. Just the regular Navy routine. You had to get up at a certain time; had to have breakfast at a certain time; you had your classes all established for you; you just followed the routine. Hoped you wouldn't stand out!

C: Did you find the classes here different from your training and indoctrination in Wisconsin?

D: Yes, it was all more sophisticated. Whatever it was. I don't remember the details, whatever it was the Navy had a set pattern and you just did it.

C: Do you remember ever going down to the Northampton Hotel, and Wiggins Tavern there? Some of the girls said they were domiciled there.

D: Yes, but they closed the tavern at that time, it was all taken over for the WAVES, I believe the whole hotel was.

C: Right, and that's where they ate.

D: I was there. As a matter of fact, there was three or four of us in a hotel room. Kind of basic; it was what you'd expect.

C: Right, that's what many of them said that lived there. You mentioned that your sister was at the college at that time.

D: Yes, she was an undergraduate. And she took great delight, when she was just casually walking to class, she'd thumb her nose at me because I couldn't stop and talk, and give me a "hi" sign, or something; it was rather fun. She enjoyed it, and I did, too.

C: Did you ever have any free time on the weekends in Northampton?

D: You had modest free time, yes. I don't remember the details about it, I'm sure I had old contacts in Northampton I think, so it wouldn't have been difficult.

C: Right, you were just about a year out of school. After you graduated from the training class, did you receive any additional training?

D: Yes, because I wanted to do Navy coding and decoding, so I was sent to communication school at Mt. Holyoke College and that course went from November 18th to January 11th, 1944.

C: So you were there a good six weeks, and do you remember the content of what you learned?

D: It was harder and it was more challenging, yes. I kind of like things that fit precisely, where you can see whether you are learning it or not learning it. So that was fun for me.

C: And the Navy was training alot of WAVES in communications, WAVE officers, specifically.

D: Yes.

C: Did you ever have a chance to meet Mildred McAfee when she was director of the WAVES?

D: I never did more than say "how do you do" to her in a big reception. I did not know her.

C: Did you ever have a chance to meet Eleanor Roosevelt?

D: I had had that chance first when I was an undergraduate at Smith and again when the President came to Corpus Christi, Texas and I was an enlisted WAVE.

C: When you finished the communications course at Holyoke, where were you next assigned?

D: I was sent again to a Naval Air Station, this time at Pensacola, Florida. I arrived there after a weeks leave on January 17th, 1944.

C: What were you assigned to do there? What was your job?

D: Specifically, I worked in the very locked up environs of the coding rooms. On the same system of watches again. It was a rotating system of three day shifts of eight hours each day and then three days off duty.

C: What exactly were you decoding?

D: Well, you would receive a message, by machine, in it would come in an alphabetical code, and you would have to transfer it so that it was in English using the codes that you were working with, so it was actually, literally decoding. We had all the tables.

C: Where were these messages coming from?

D: Other air stations, Washington, D.C., wherever it was.

C: And again this was reserved for the WAVES, per se. This type of work.

D: No, there were some males, but the WAVES were doing it to the extent that they could to take their places.

C: Right, of those who could be sent out. How large was your office? Do you remember how many people you worked with at Pensacola?

D: I suppose there were four or five in the office, something like that.

C: Did you like this job? Did you enjoy it?

D: Yes, I did.

C: Were there any disadvantages to it?

D: I think there were advantages because you had more free time around which to do things. It was a regular pattern.

C: Yes, nine days on and three days off. Where did you live in Pensacola?

D: We had the regular bachelor officer quarters, but called WAVE officer quarters; those were pretty spartan, too.

C: Barracks like. Do you remember what you did for recreation there?

D: Just the normal things that you would do. We had a gorgeous sandy beach right out in front, right on the base. Three days off, I remember maybe once or twice we went to New Orleans for the three days. So it was possible to do just about what you could, as long as you didn't need too much gasoline.

C: Right, that was rationed. Did any of the gals have cars?

D: Nobody had any cars, no. Maybe some of the men did, I don't know.

C: Did you date navy men there too?

D: Yes.

C: What was your rank at this point in time?

D: I was just an ensign, until I made Lieutenant, Junior grade, on the first of March, 1945.

C: Now when you were at Pensacola, did anything unusual happen? Anything outstanding that you remember?

D: I really remember what happened in Corpus Christi, Texas, when I met the President of the United States. But that was back earlier.

C: Can you describe that experience?

D: I'd be happy to, because it was a very exciting moment. In the old adage in the Navy or anything in the military, you are never meant to volunteer, because usually you get into trouble volunteering. But the word came to some of us enlisted WAVES that this was a good thing to do. Do volunteer for this one. So we were taken on the proper day, the day before. We had to be tested to make sure we could drive a car. And then we were taken to the Buick agency in town, and given a car. We were going to



be driving in a parade that included the president of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, and his equivalent from Mexico, his name I don't remember. I certainly didn't drive the President, but I had his press secretary, Steven Early, and I enjoyed that very much. When we went to the train, we saw the President get off with all his difficulty. We saw and could pat little "Fala", the famous little dog. And then we drove from the railroad track onto the base and then there was a huge reception and welcoming committees as only the military can do. And then we did it in reverse and took him back to the train. But it was an opportunity that not many people have.

C: And a thrill. Did you ever shake his hand?

D: We met him, yes. I shook his hand.

C: Formally introduced?

D: Formally introduced, the drivers of the cars in the procession were given an opportunity to do that.

C: So he was reviewing the base and meeting with the President of Mexico.

D: We were only drivers of cars in the procession. We were "nothing" at the base. We were just little ensigns. Actually,

no, I wasn't even an ensign then; I was an enlisted WAVE while in Texas where this event took place.

C: Right, back then. But that was a thrill, and very unique. Very different.

D: I thought so.

C: Meeting the President.

D: Not an everyday experience.

C: Right, not an everyday occurrence. Did anything outstanding happen in Pensacola, anything that struck you or stood out as part of your experiences?

D: No, it was just a very interesting place to be. It was a changing sea of classes of officers in Flight Training. Among each class of pilots coming through; you'd get to know some. Somebody would say "you must meet so and so; it's old so and so's brother. He'll be coming through in the next class for training", so it was a fun place to be!

C: Yes, I imagine, a very big and bustling base at that time as well. When did you finally leave Pensacola?

D: Well, I had applied for and hoped that maybe I'd get to be one of the ones who would get to go overseas as a WAVE. They were just starting that procedure. , And again, lady luck was looking at me, because my orders came through, and I was assigned to the Naval Air Station in Honolulu, Hawaii. I arrived there on May 15th in 1945.

C: And how did you get there?

D: Well, in those days to go to, what was John Rogers Field, was in a flying boat. So we landed in the water there near the base. And I was always at that base, Naval Air Station there, John Rogers.

C: Well, that was quite an experience. Were you thrilled to go to Hawaii?

D: I was thrilled. It was like the center "mecca" for everybody you ever knew that was serving out in the Pacific, whether they were in the Army, the Marines, the Air Force, or the Navy. If they knew you were there, they were going to look you up when they were passing through Hawaii. It was a very exciting experience.

C: Now were you in communications there as well?

D: I was a communications coding officer there, just the same.

C: Same kind of work. Where did you live, and did you live on the base?

D: We lived on the base, in WAVE officer quarters again. And those were clean and nice and new because they were brand new. Built on the base as the base was developed for all the women to come through.

C: Where was John Rogers?

D: It's actually on the outskirts of Honolulu itself, and on the water.

C: I wonder if it was anywhere near where the ARIZONA was.

D: Across, I can't quite describe it, but it wasn't looking over where Pearl Harbor was bombed. It was out on the open part of the water, the Pacific there.

C: Oh, I see. Do you know how many WAVES, about, were domiciled there or working there?

D: I really don't remember that.

C: Because we have some interesting pictures in the archives in the Layton collection; he was in intelligence with FRUPAC, of the WAVES working in these decoding offices. Now when you were there, you had the opportunity to meet some famous American admirals.

D: Yes, I did, and through the way things work, you meet somebody, and they meet somebody, and I ended up meeting somebody who was an aide to Admiral Pride. And so I went with the aide, and we went to the admirals quarters for recreation. And that was a very pleasant thing, so I had the opportunity to meet, nickname, Bull Halsey a couple of times. He wouldn't remember me, but I'll remember him. Quite a colorful man. So that was kind of a nice extra opportunity.

C: Did you ever meet or see Admiral Nimitz?

D: I never met Admiral Nimitz.

C: Or Admiral Spruance?

D: No, just a name. Halsey was the one I remember meeting, of the admirals.

C: Well, that's great, that was a nice entrée for you. Did you have the opportunity to travel around the Hawaiian Islands?

D: The Admiral had the use of a small plane, and sometimes we would get to go on the small plane with him, and that was probably at the end, near the end of the war.

C: Where did you travel to?

D: We'd fly over to Maui or we'd fly out to...over the other islands. I think we landed on Maui, the only thing I remember is that it was a very pretty island.

C: Did you ever stay there overnight?

D: We stayed once or twice there, overnight. I guess he had friends, I don't remember just what the detail was. A very nice change from just being on the island, of Oahu.

C: Yes, you get island fever after awhile.

D: That's right, that's right.

C: Were you friendly with the WAVES there? Did you make any lasting friendships in Hawaii?

D: Certainly did. One of them was in my wedding when we got home. She came back home on the hospital ship with me; she was a good friend.

C: That's great, I assume you dated navy men there in Hawaii.

D: That's right, but whoever was passing through, the people who knew you at home would come through. One time there was a Brown University get together at the home of a judge in Hawaii. He was a Brown graduate, whose name I don't remember but a friend who I'd grown up with in Providence called me, was coming through at that time and asked me if I'd like to go to a Luau that this judge was sponsoring for any Brown graduates that could be located in any of the services that were there. And it ended up with about 140 people at this Luau. So that was kind of fun, it was when the war was winding down, but there was a good bit of esprit de corps.

C: Oh yes, that's great. Well, you had some nice opportunities there and I assume you enjoyed your work.

D: I enjoyed the work, yes I did, and I fell in love with the Hawaiian Islands so that was no trouble either. I think everybody does.

C: What was your reaction to the death of F.D.R. in April of 45?

D: I had a special reaction to that because I was in Pensacola, and he died on my watch. That meant I was the senior officer in the coding communications room that night when we got the word.

Protocol was such that I couldn't, under that tension, remember whether I should have notified the Marine Commandant at the base, or the Navy Commandant of the base. And if I did it wrong, they were going to be very cross with me. I forget now which was the correct answer, but I guess I did it right. I think I had a pretty good chief who said, "I think, Ms. Freeman, it was so and so" and with his help I did the right thing!

C: Oh that's good.

D: But I have a special feeling for that day because it was very traumatic for the country anyway.

C: Oh, I'm sure it was.

D: Had to get the order out, then they had to get the flags all at half mast, and do all the other things they have to do, and notify everybody right and left.

C: Yes, he had served for so long, and was such a great president. Do you remember any events surrounding VE day in May 45? Do you remember that as an outstanding occurrence?

D: VJ Day I remember more, when the war ended in the Pacific, the other I don't remember anything specific. But I think you are referring, are you, Evelyn, to VJ Day?



C: I was referring to VE Day, first.

D: No, I don't have a recollection of VE Day.

C: VJ Day is much more prominent in most people's memories.

D: That's true, and it would be in mine.

C: Sure, do you remember your reaction to the end of the war and VJ Day, and also the way in which you celebrated?

D: I do very vividly, because there was a Providence good friend that I was going out with that night named Avery Seaman; he's a Newport resident now. And I at that time had access to a jeep because they had transferred me from communications to entertainment at the end of the war, to fill somebody else's shoes. So I had a jeep and we were using my jeep. He didn't have any transportation from his ship, and I remember celebrating by driving down that main boulevard in Honolulu, people were passing champagne bottles back and forth it was just the most heart felt buoyant celebration. It was something I'd never been part of before.

C: Did you party at the officer's club that evening?

D: I'm sure we were at the officer's club, but I'm not sure we were there that night or not. The officer's club was a very nice, wonderful place.

C: Can you tell me a little bit about your work in entertainment that you were transferred to.

D: That was really a misnomer, say somebody's entertainment troop was coming in and you had to arrange transportation or they were going to come and perform for a group at the base XYZ; it was pretty pro-forma at that point. I didn't have to know anything about the entertainment field. Somebody just had to sign some papers and make sure it all worked out.

C: And arrange transportation.

D: Yes, and at just about that point, I got my orders to go home.

C: Oh, OK. That was kind of an interesting billet. Regarding that, did you ever see any entertainers, or Hollywood stars, or whoever came through?

D: I remember meeting Ted Williams, and Johnny Pesky, who were baseball people.

C: Oh, OK.

D: I liked seeing the baseball people.

C: How long were you in Hawaii after the war ended? How long did you remain there?

D: That must have been August, and I came home in December 1945.

C: And how did you get home?

D: They were sending the WAVES home as they were detached, on hospital ships at that time, so I came back on a hospital ship with all kinds of other people. All I remember is that some of my friends were with me, that we were put in the bowels of the ship, and there were four bunks in a tier just as close together as you can imagine, and they said "well, you're the littlest, BB, so you get the top bunk." But we had a calm crossing back into San Francisco. And we were welcomed as we came in under the Golden Gate because they knew the ship was coming. Not for the WAVES being any part of it, but for the soldiers and other military people on board who served really, out in action.

C: Right, so there was a big celebration when the ship came in. Did you meet your husband during the service?

D: I had known him all my life as a next door neighbor practically. But I saw him in a new light after corresponding all during the war. And the Navy, in it's great wisdom, finally let his old cruiser called the CONCORD, come through Pearl Harbor, and I saw him there, and we decided things were really quite serious, and that we would announce our engagement when we got home. So that was kind of the highlight of the end of what I was doing in the navy.

C: Great, so you hadn't seen him for three years then.

D: Yes, not since before that, almost four years. So it was three and a half, you're right.

C: So it was basically, a romance by correspondence during that time frame. Can you tell me where and when you were mustered out of the navy?

D: I just came to Rhode Island. Well, I guess there were some orders for me in San Francisco, and then my orders to go to the East coast, and I think it was all through Boston. I don't really remember the details.

C: So you were finally discharged about four years after the war weren't you?

D: I was finally released from all active duty, no more active duty after December 45. But I wasn't really released from active duty until the 13th of January, 1946.

C: That's when you were discharged from the navy.

D: And I stayed in the reserves until July of 1949.

C: Oh, you did?

D: Yes, but no active duty. Just in the Reserve.

C: Inactive Reserves.

D: Inactive. Whatever you should call it, protocol wise.

C: Right, and then you were finally released after that. Do you remember if you received any medals for your service?

D: No.

C: Was your highest rank Lieutenant (jg)?

D: That's correct.

C: Were you happy or sad to leave the service?

D: I was sad, because it had been a very broadening experience for me, having had a shelter of girls' school, and girls' college it was a hundred percent male world, and a hundred percent different than anything I'd ever done. So I was sad to have that end. But, then time to get on with something else.

C: Exactly, that's how many of the ladies felt, mixed emotions. Did you have any preconceived expectations when you entered the WAVES?

D: I really didn't. There were Navy nurses, but there hadn't been Navy WAVES. So I didn't mind being first in something. That always has a kind of excitement.

C: Did you find that the WAVES were a smoothly run organization?

D: I thought it was. Mildred McAfee Horton was a credit on all sides.

C: She certainly was, a very remarkable person. She just died two years ago, in New Hampshire. Did you know of any discipline problems, or did you encounter any during your experiences in the WAVES?

D: I really don't remember.

C: Because sometimes people were dismissed because of pregnancy, or homosexuality. I wondered if any of that had surfaced.

D: Those things happen, but by and large I think people were team players.

C: Do you think that the WAVES had a strong sense of esprit de corps?

D: I do.

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

D: I'd have to say that "redirection" is probably a strong word, I found the whole experience valuable because you were in something where you were not in charge. Whatever you had gone in to do, you had to do it the navy way. And for the length of time, you didn't know how long the war was going to go on. So I think that was a good experience to be where you were, not calling the shots, and your family weren't calling the shots, or whatever else you want to say.

C: Judged on your own merit.

D: Yes. I think it was a very good thing for me in every way.

C: Do you think that the war and the WAVES experience made you more independent and self reliant?

D: Oh I do, I think so. Yes.

C: Do you think it broadened your horizons, meeting people from different areas of the country, and different social classes?

D: Without any doubt. I like people anyway. I thought it was a really great experience for me.

C: Did you feel that what women were expected to do, and to be changed when the war was over? or was it back to life as it was pre-war?

D: I think it most definitely changed the way women were accepted over all, whether it was Rosie the Riveter or something else. They had achieved some respect for doing jobs that they hadn't done before.

C: Did you maintain any service friendships after you were discharged?

D: Many.

C: Do you still keep in contact with any of these people today?



D: I still do.

C: Where did you settle after the war?

D: It was pretty parochial, I came back to Providence, Rhode Island. My husband was on the G.I. Bill; he got a Law Degree at Harvard. We lived in Cambridge and then when he finished there, we came back and he hoped to get a job either on the West coast in a law firm, or the East coast. But certainly not in the middle of the country. He got hired by a firm in Providence, so we came back, and have been in Providence ever since.

C: That's great. Did you work at all?

D: I taught school. I was trained as a teacher. And I taught nursery school and kindergarten.

C: In Providence?

D: No. At the Park School in Boston. Outside Boston, when he was in Law School. But when I became pregnant, we moved back to Providence. I didn't teach; I was a substitute teacher, not a regular teacher. Then I just did volunteer work, training in the Junior League, or whatever else. And I always worked for education in some way, or our childrens' schools, college, and the library and church.

C: Great. Did any of your children join the navy at any point in time?

D: No. It was the time of the Vietnam War when our son was finishing college in 1970 and, luckily, he was not drafted, because he was opposed to that war.

C: Do you have any other comments to make on your service in the WAVES in World War II, anything that we've missed, any experiences or individuals?

D: I just feel I was very fortunate in the way the orders worked for me. To meet such interesting people and to have the breaks that were so different than just being a communications coding officer in the city of New York for three and a half years. After all, I had never lived in Texas, never met a cockroach before I went in the navy. I got to meet President Roosevelt, and then to end up in Hawaii where you were just in the center of all the action and the efforts of the war in the Pacific. So to me it was a good thing to have done, and I'm pleased that I did it and I hope that it was constructive.

C: Absolutely.

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