

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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No. 49

AILEEN BEDELL FETTER

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INTERVIEWEE: AILEEN BEDELL FETTER

INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

DATE: MARCH 14, 1997

C: This is the first oral history interview with Aileen Fetter who served in the WAVES in World War II. Today's date is March 14, 1997. The interview is being conducted at her home at 85 Little Rest Road in Kingston, Rhode Island. Aileen served as a Pharmacist Mate First Class in World War II in Washington, D.C. I'm so pleased that you consented to be interviewed for our program on the WAVES in World War II today, Aileen. I would like to begin the interview by asking you where you were born and when you were born.

F: I was born in Westfield, New Jersey, September 30, 1922.

C: What did your father do for a living?

F: My father was a civil engineer and he commuted to New York everyday. Every once in a while he would take me into the office and I would spend the day and I loved it.

C: Oh, that's great. What did your mother do?

F: My mother stayed at home and took care of her house and her family.

C: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

F: I have three sisters; one a year older than I am and twin sisters who are ten years younger than I am.

C: Did your older sister join the WAVES?

F: No.

C: You are the only one in the family who did. Did you spend your growing up years in Westfield, New Jersey?

F: Yes, I did.

C: Did you go to the local high school there?

F: Yes.

C: When did you graduate?

F: 1940 was the year.

C: What were your post high school graduation plans? Did you plan to go to college or work or what?

F: When I was growing up it was during the depression time. My father not only took care of his own family but his mother, his uncle and his cousin. He supported them in some ways. And there just wasn't sufficient funds for my sister, my older sister, and I

to go to college. But we did go to a shorter school. I went to Forsyth in Boston and became a dental hygienist.

C: How long was that school?

F: That was a little over a year.

C: Where did you live in Boston during that time frame?

F: I lived at the Franklin Square House which was a large unit for women who were going to school in Boston and young women who were working in Boston.

C: Was Forsyth connected with BU, Boston University?

F: No, it was not. Our professors came from Tufts Dental School and Harvard. We had great training there and it was very interesting.

C: It sounds very thorough. What inspired you to become a dental hygienist?

F: Well, my uncle was a dental surgeon and he interested me in becoming a dental hygienist.

C: Oh, great. That's a good, practical occupation. You mentioned when we were chatting informally before the interview that you met your future husband in Boston. Was it at that time and how did you meet him?

F: Yes. My husband was in the service and stationed at Fort

Devens. His family lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I went to the church that was in Cambridge for their evening fellowship of young people. When he was free to get home from Devens, he would also go to those meetings. And that's where we met.

C: Good. Did you proceed to date during the rest of that year?

F: Yes. I did. No, actually, we didn't really date until toward the end. I was the one who asked him to go out first. We had a dance at the end of the year at Forsyth. Since we were all girls, we had to ask the boys. That was our first date. When I asked him to go to the dance with me, he accepted. And that was practically the last date that we had. We did see each other a few times. Then he left Devens and I had to leave Boston, so our courtship was carried on by mail.

C: Letters back and forth. Well, you needed a job, obviously, after you graduated from Forsyth. Where did you go to work?

F: I went to Bath, Maine and I worked for my uncle. He was a dental surgeon and I worked as his assistant. I did my dental hygiene work just on Mondays when he was not in the office. The rest of my time was spent helping him in the surgical office. That was a very interesting chance for me to really get into the surgery part of it.

C: Did you like your work?

F: Oh, I loved it.

C: Good. How long did you stay there?

F: I was only there a year and then I decided to do something else. The war was on. The war had started. I guess I just felt that I was not doing much to help our country.

C: Do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941 and what your reaction was?

F: I was in Bath and I guess that's what really started me thinking that I had better do something more than I was doing at the time.

C: How did you hear about the WAVES? Do you remember?

F: Well, there was a lot of publicity about it at the time.

C: What was attractive about the Navy, let's say, versus the Army or the Coast Guard?

F: I don't know. I never considered the Army or the Coast Guard.

C: I guess the Navy publicity reached you first.

F: Must have. But, I really don't remember.

C: Patriotism, you'd say, then was your major motive for joining the WAVES.

F: I think so. I knew so many people, so many young men who were in the service. All of my friends seemed to be in the service, the

boys that I knew. I felt maybe I should be helping in some way.

C: Did you know any women who enlisted at that time?

F: No.

C: Okay. So you didn't have a pal to support you when you went in.

F: No. This was all my decision.

C: Do you remember when you enlisted in the WAVES?

F: No. I don't really remember. Do you mean what year?

C: Yes. What year you enlisted.

F: It must have been 1943 (4/19/1943 to 10/17/1945).

C: Do you remember where you went to enlist?

F: I think I left Bath and went to my home in New Jersey and enlisted from that point.

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

F: Well, my parents were always supportive of what I decided to do, and my independence. Actually, I think my father was kind of proud because he had served in World War I. He served a short time in World War I. He was supposed to go on submarines. Then they found out that he was an engineer. The Navy decided that he should not do that but should stay an engineer and help the country in

that way.

C: So you had some Navy in your family, your father, briefly?

F: Yes. Very briefly.

C: Well, that was a big decision for you to make. Where did you do your training and indoctrination?

F: At Hunter College in New York City.

C: Which was fairly nearby. You were familiar with the city because of living in the metropolitan area. Do you remember what your initial impression of the U.S. Naval Training School at Hunter was when you first arrived there?

F: Well, it was all very strange to me and a completely new situation.

C: What were your living conditions like? Where did you live?

F: We lived in a dormitory. It was a large room, as I remember it, with a lot of double decker beds. I just remember that it was my first experience for living in a ward type of building.

C: Did you mind having roommates and getting use to them?

F: No.

C: How was your day structured at Hunter? What did you do? Do you remember the pattern that you had to follow?

F: I remember we had to get up early and we had to do calisthenics right after we got up out of bed. Then we had to get dressed. Then we had to clean and they were very fussy about how well we cleaned. We had assignments.

C: Did you ever get demerits or whatever for not preparing things correctly?

F: Yes. I did for not doing a correct square corner on my sheets. But I learned quickly after that first scolding.

C: That must have been part of the white glove inspections.

F: Yes. That was it. To this day, I do a perfect square corner on my bed.

C: Great. The Navy taught you well. Did you mind marching to classes?

F: I didn't care too much for that. And I didn't care too much for the drill part of it. I knew it was necessary, but it was not something that I preferred to do.

C: Do you remember what the classes were like?

F: No. I don't really remember those at all.

C: Whether they were challenging, easy or difficult.

F: I have no idea. I can't even remember what the classes were about.

C: Did you like the discipline of military life?

F: Well, actually, I was never in a situation where the discipline was terribly strong.

C: Well, the routine I guess.

F: The routine. Well, like Charlie Brown once said, "I love routine as long as it isn't the same old routine." And it was not strong enough that you didn't have some leeway.

C: Yes. That you didn't bridle against it because you were so independent before and led your own life. Do you remember anything about the cuisine or the food at Hunter and how it was served and where you had to eat?

F: I don't remember complaining about the food and I love to eat. So, it couldn't have been too bad.

C: Did you like the uniform?

F: Oh, yes. I thought the WAVES had a nice uniform. It was as feminine as an outfit can be if you are in a uniform.

C: Exactly. Many people were attracted to that vice the Army khaki. Some of the WAVES mentioned that there were extracurricular activities like the newspaper or the singing platoon at Hunter. I wonder if you were exposed to those or participated.

F: I never heard about them.

C: Did you have any limited time off on weekends?

F: I remember I had some time off but not very much. My sister and her husband were in the New York area, (my brother-in-law was in the Army) and I remember he came once in his jeep and took me to their apartment for dinner. That was my first ride in a jeep.

C: Did you have to attend church when you were at Hunter?

F: I don't think so.

C: Do you remember anything amusing or outstanding that happened during that six weeks of training?

F: I remember our unit was reviewed by Madame Chang Kai-Shek and it was the day after we'd had our shots for diphtheria or one of the shots that many people have a reaction to. I remember the orders were that if any of the girls fainted or passed out we were to completely ignore them, step over them, and keep on going. I remember I did not feel very well, but I did not pass out. There were some girls who did however because they just had such a reaction from the shots. It must have been typhoid shots. It was so long ago that I don't remember. It was kind of a thrill. She was a remarkably beautiful, stunning woman. I thought that was a nice thing for her to do - to review us.

C: Did you ever have a chance to meet Mildred McAfee, who was director of the WAVES, or ever see her?

F: No.

C: She was quite an outstanding person, too. Do you remember any entertainments or amusements that they had at Hunter? Concerts?

F: No. I don't remember any concerts, just movies.

C: Well, when it came for you to complete your training after the six weeks, did you express any preference for the kind of job that you wanted or were you just assigned?

F: I was just assigned, because of my training.

C: Yes. They knew that you were a dental hygienist. Did you need any additional training before you assumed your regular duties?

F: I had to go with the group that was assigned to dental hygiene to Bethesda, Maryland. I had to stay there while the other women had their training, but I didn't have to have any extra training.

C: So, what did you do?

F: Well, I just sort of helped around the clinic and I attended the classes that they had for them. It was just additional preparation.

C: Yes, preparation. Do you remember how long that training was?

F: I honestly don't remember.

C: Okay. Well, after you audited this additional training, where were you finally assigned?

F: The Navy Yard in Washington, D.C., to the Dispensary there. I went there as a third class pharmacist mate and I was assigned to the dental office. Being a member of the medical corps, I had to stand all the duties in the Dispensary in addition to the dental office. So I was more than just in the dental division.

C: What kind of duties were these when you say, "stand the duty"?

F: Well, the Navy Yard Dispensary serviced not only service personnel but it serviced the workers. They made the guns, big cannons and so forth, in the Navy Yard. We had a rather large Dispensary and we had to take care of the civilians who worked in the Navy Yard as well as Navy personnel. Many ships got back to that part of the country after being at sea a long time. We had to do all of the dental check-ups for the boys when they got back to the country. They also had the diving school at the Navy Yard. We even had Russian officers in our dental office and we had to do work on them. That was interesting because they couldn't speak too much English. They spoke some English. They were a very interesting group of people.

C: That sounds fascinating. So you had a lot of clients, so to speak, for the dental office. How many other hygienists were there besides yourself?

F: I think there were four doctors plus the commanding officer and they each had hygienist working with them or a girl trained for that role. The commanding officer actually chose me as his

assistant. So I not only had my dentist that I worked for but I was also in charge of the commanding officer's office.

C: Did he actually perform dental work or was it administrative work?

F: No. It was administrative work. On occasion he might do something for someone special that he knew.

C: So, you kind of had double duty...

F: Yes, I did.

C: ...as an administrative assistant and as a dental hygienist.

F: Right. And then I had to stand duty in the Medical Dispensary after my other work. People came into the Dispensary for medical attention which was a new thing for me.

C: What did that consist of? What did you have to do in the medical end of the Dispensary?

F: You had to help the medical doctors who were there. Or, if it was in the evening, which it often times was, you were there by yourself.

C: Kind of standing watch.

F: That's it. You were standing watch, attending patients, and you were putting pills together. We use to have to mix our own. They use to have what they called, the headache pills, called APC's

that came in powder form. We use to have to mix them. The aspirin included codeine. That was back when you were able to have that. We use to have to pack the little plastic pill capsules. We even had to swab the decks (floors) and polish them.

C: You sound as if you were very, very busy.

F: We certainly were.

C: How many hours would you say you worked per week?

F: We added up about seventy hours per week we worked. We didn't have much time for...

C: Recreation.

F: No.

C: Did you work on Saturday and Sunday?

F: Oh, yes. I think our extra duty came every two days or every four days. But it didn't matter whether it was Saturday, Sunday or any day of the week.

C: You worked then. Were you tired as a result of that? Did you remember being exhausted or tired?

F: Well, yes. But everybody was working hard then.

C: Yes. You were young and you probably could take it more. Can you tell me where you lived during this time frame?

F: We were lucky. We were able to live in a brand new apartment house that they had just opened up. I roomed with five other girls so there were six of us in one room. We did our own cooking, our own shopping, our own cleaning. We were free to come and go as we wanted. We had to sign in and out, of course. But it was just like civilian living. We had fun. I still keep in contact with some of the girls.

C: What did you do for recreation during that time frame?

F: Mostly, we went out for dinner. There was not much of a place to go to then.

C: Right. There weren't the entertainments there are today.

F: The only entertainment was the USO, which we use to go to once in a while.

C: What kind of entertainment did they provide?

F: I really don't remember. They use to have dances, I guess. Once in a while, they would have a musical. Someone would come in to entertain. I don't know how often we had a chance to go but not too often. All of our hours were different. We all worked at different places in Washington.

C: How did you get together with these gals?

F: We were just assigned.

C: Oh, so this was a WAVE building?

F: Yes.

C: A WAVE apartment building.

F: Yes. It was brand new apartment building that the Navy took over.

C: Right. For the WAVES. Where was it located?

F: It was located just about a block up from the White House on Eighteenth and G Street.

C: Was that Arlington Farms? No. It must have been in the District of Columbia.

F: Yes.

C: Okay.

F: We were just about a block up from the White House and it was right in the middle of things.

C: Oh, absolutely. That's very interesting because some of the gals lived at Arlington Farms, in Arlington, which was a huge WAVES quarters. But this was a special apartment building.

F: This was just Navy girls. We had double decker beds.

C: Yes, bunks.

F: Bunks, yes.

C: Well, that's wonderful. That sounds like an interesting way to live at that time frame. A little bit different than most others.

F: We assigned ourselves cooking duty, cleaning duty, shopping and many others. This was a job because we were on meat coupons. We couldn't have any sugar. We had to have that horrible saccharine - saccharine pills. But it was fun.

C: Yes. It must have been. Sounds like it. How long were you located in Washington? From what time frame to what time?

F: From the time I finished at Bethesda until the war ended.

C: So you were there at least two years in D.C.?

F: Yes.

C: Did you like living in the District of Columbia?

F: Yes. It was nice.

C: Was there a sense of excitement going on at that time?

F: I think so. Yes.

C: Did you ever have a chance to see President Roosevelt or Eleanor Roosevelt?

F: No.

C: Do you remember the dentists and the doctors for whom you worked? Who was your CO?

F: Yes. He was very nice. I was married in Washington when my husband-to-be got back from Europe. My commanding officer and his wife lived in Falls Church, Virginia and they gave us a reception at their home when we were married.

C: That's great. They were very friendly.

F: Oh, they were. They were a great couple.

C: What did you like about your assignment and your work duties in Washington at the Navy Yard? What was the positive side of it?

F: Well, we had to work hard. But, I think, in my situation, I still felt free and not tied down with a lot of rules. We were free to do what we wanted on our time off. We didn't have too many restrictions. We had to work hard, but we were happy to do that.

C: Was there any thing you didn't like about your job as a dental hygienist in the Navy?

F: Well, not about being in the Navy. I was sorry we were at war. I would like very much to have had the war over. That was the only thing.

C: Did you keep up with war news during this time frame?

F: Yes, as much as we could.

C: So, you were well in-tuned to what was going on?

F: Yes.

C: You mentioned that you kept in contact with your future husband via letters.

F: Yes.

C: Where was he stationed?

F: He was at Devens when I first met him and then he was in several camps in this country. Seems to me he was constantly on the go changing camps. He was in an evacuation hospital. He was enlisted, but he did a lot of the training of what his job was in this country. He would train a unit and then he would be moved to another camp and train that unit for the job that he was performing. So he stayed in this country a fair amount of time before he went overseas. Since he was in an evacuation hospital, his unit was moved by gliders. He had that training and then went overseas.

C: You must have been concerned about him then?

F: Oh, I was. But, then we were concerned about all of the people going overseas.

C: You mentioned that you began your Naval career as a pharmacist mate third class. But, eventually, you became first class. You were promoted. How did these promotions come about? Did you have to take tests? Did you have to study for them?

F: Yes. I had to take tests. I assume I studied. I don't really remember. But I remember taking the tests.

C: And you eventually got to first class, which is quite good. Do you remember anything about your pay? How much it was and if you felt you could survive on it.

F: Well, I did survive. We had subsistence because we were living outside of the naval barracks. We had subsistence money. It wasn't very much, but it apparently was enough to keep us fed because we ate well.

C: That's good. You could survive on your pay then. Did you date any navy men during this time frame? I know you were writing to your future husband but did you ever date any men?

F: Well, a few. We didn't have much time to date. We really didn't.

C: Well, you were so busy.

F: Yes.

C: How were you treated in the Dispensary and at the dental clinic by the doctors and the other men that worked there?

F: Oh, just great. They were very, very nice.

C: Did you ever experience any harassment or ill treatment?

F: Never.

C: So you were in a good situation.

F: Yes.

C: Did you ever have any contact with civilians during this time frame either outside your work situation or within? And, if you did, do you remember how they reacted to women in uniform?

F: I don't ever remember having anyone react against women in the service. Whether they had any of those feelings, I don't know. They were not expressed to me. I know we had to have transportation from where we lived to the Navy Yard. We had to go on public transportation. We were lucky enough that, somehow or other, we had a civilian who worked in the Navy Yard and he had a car. He use to pick up a car load of us every morning and take us to work. Then, if we were off duty at the time he came home, he brought us home.

C: That's great.

F: It helped him because we paid him a small amount of money and it was much easier transportation than the local transportation. He was very nice. He was a civilian. I can't remember many other civilians that I came in contact with except those who came into the Dispensary. But we didn't get to know them.

C: Right. Did you write to your parents or your friends regarding your WAVE experiences? Letters home?

F: I suppose I did. I'm not a very good correspondent.

C: Did you ever get any time off during this time frame with leave for vacations or whatever and what did you do with that?

F: I did. I remember my parents had moved to Indiana. My father's work as an engineer sent him to Indiana. The work he did was for a company in Gary, Indiana. My father worked with oil refineries; he was on the cross-country pipeline. His company built things. He worked for EBASCO which is a big construction company for dams, bridges, and oil refineries and they sent him to Indiana. I remember going out there to visit with them on my leaves.

C: Good. That must have been interesting. A new place.

F: Yes. They had a darling house.

C: You were in Washington in April 1945 when FDR died in Warm Springs. Do you remember the funeral? Were you a participant or were you an observer of that?

F: I remember he passed away but it didn't change what I was doing.

C: Or impact your work?

F: No.

C: You were also in Washington on VJ Day and that was quite a momentous day for you. Can you describe that day and what was going on in your life?

F: Yes, it was. Well, my husband had gotten back from overseas to retrain to go over to the area of Japan. We were married on VJ Day in Washington, not knowing that that was going to be VJ Day. The

word that the war was over came at our reception in Falls Church. This was at about seven o'clock at night and I immediately changed into my other clothes. We decided we better get back to Washington because we had a hotel reservation right in the center of the city. We knew that people would begin to gather in Washington. We had a woman who drove us back to Washington. By the time we got there, the streets were so filled with people. The streetcars were just stalled right where they were because they couldn't move. You couldn't have gotten another person in front of the White House. The woman who drove us couldn't get anywhere near the White House. There was so much of a crowd around, she had to let us out. We had to walk past the White House. Everybody was hugging everybody and kissing everybody. The woman might still be stuck there with her car, I don't know if she ever got home.

C: Isn't that amazing.

F: The cars drove up and down the street all night long honking their horns.

C: Yes. I can imagine. It was jubilation at that point. Where were you married?

F: We were married in the Baptist church, Calvary Baptist Church, in Washington, D.C.

C: Did you wear a gown?

F: I wore a gown and I had to have special permission to wear it. Two of my roommates were my bridesmaids. The ushers and the best man were Navy personnel that I worked with. My husband didn't know his best man. A very nice, young fellow I worked with agreed to be his best man so everyone in the service, except for my sister who was one of my bridesmaids, were Navy people that I knew.

C: Well, how nice. That's great. Did your parents come?

F: My parents came from Indiana. My husband's folks came from Massachusetts. We just had a nice time. That was the first time I had met his mother, incidentally.

C: Oh, that's interesting. Yes. Because you were in Washington and they were in Cambridge. Well that was a very, very happy time for you. You must have been thrilled that the war was over.

F: Oh, yes.

C: What did that mean for you and your husband?

F: Well, that meant that we were both able to get our discharge from the Navy and from the Army. I started my freshman year at college, thanks to Uncle Sam.

C: You took advantage of the G.I. Bill. Can I just double back a little bit and ask you when and where you were discharged from the Navy?

F: I was discharged in Washington, in October 1945. We had just time enough to make my freshman year at Bucknell University. We missed just one week of school. My husband had to go back to Bucknell to finish his senior year because they had taken him in the Army between his junior and senior year. So he had to go back and finish his senior year, and I started my freshman year. Then, when he graduated from Bucknell and went to graduate school in Rochester in New York, I transferred to the University of Rochester. I guess that's it.

C: Yes. You were in Rochester at that point finishing part of your schooling. To go back to the Navy a little bit. Were you happy or sad to leave the Navy in October of '45? How did you feel about your discharge?

F: Well, I felt excited because I knew it was the start of a new life for me and my husband. I was anxious to get started at the university. It was just a whole new life for me and, I guess, I was...

C: Ready for it.

F: Yes. I was ready for it.

C: Did you feel that the WAVES had a strong sense of esprit-de-corps?

F: I think so.

C: ...among the girls. Did you have any preconceived expectations when you entered the WAVES as to what it would be like?

F: I had no idea what it was going to be like. I didn't know whether I had done the correct thing or not.

C: Did you feel that the WAVES was a smoothly run organization?

F: Oh, yes.

C: No glitches?

F: No.

C: Did you know anybody who was discharged for disciplinary reasons?

F: No.

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

F: I think it helped me in my independence. But I always felt independent anyway. My parents were very supportive of whatever I wanted to do. I just think it helped me grow and be able to take care of myself. It certainly helped.

C: Did you feel that it broadened your horizons for meeting new people and exposure to new people?

F: Oh, yes. I've always been rather shy. I'm still shy, but I've tried to overcome that.

C: Did you have any career ambitions as a result of the WAVES experience?

F: Not as an experience of the WAVES, except the fact that I felt very lucky that I was able to have my college education taken care of.

C: That was a great opportunity for the ladies.

F: It was wonderful. It was wonderful.

C: You took advantage of the G.I. Bill. Did you maintain any service friendships when the war was over and are you still in contact with these people?

F: Yes, my two bridesmaids I am in regular contact with. I have seen them both, not together. Both my husband and I have been out to see the two girls who were my bridesmaids.

C: Oh, that's great. We talked previously and both of those are interested in the WAVE organizations.

F: We just celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary. I didn't realize they were going to do this, but they sent us a beautiful bouquet of flowers. They signed it, "Your Bridesmaids".

C: There were WAVES reunions after the war, in Boston and New York. Did you have a chance to attend any of these?

F: No, I never did that.

C: You were busy with your education, both at Bucknell and at the University of Rochester, after the war. How did you end up in Rhode Island?

F: Well, my husband had gone to Divinity School in Rochester, New York. When he finished there, we went to Oneida, New York, where my husband had a church. We were there four years, then he wanted to get into University Pastorate work. He was invited to come here, to Rhode Island, to become the Protestant Chaplain at the University of Rhode Island. He was there almost thirty-five years.

C: You also finished your education here and began a teaching career. Can you comment upon that as well?

F: Yes. I had to leave the University of Rochester after my first semester of my senior year, due to illness. When we came here to Rhode Island, we were on the campus of the University of Rhode Island. I, eventually, decided to go back and finish up and get my degree, which I did. Then I didn't do anything with that, as far as working was concerned, outside of the home. Then I just decided to take a course in teaching reading during the summer, just for the fun of it. I loved it so I decided that maybe I would like to become a teacher. My college degree had been Sociology with a minor in Psychology, so I decided to go back to school and take the few courses I had to have for teaching, which I did, and then I became a teacher of third grade. That was a great deal of fun for me. I love to teach.

C: Where did you teach?

F: I taught at Wickford Elementary School in Wickford, Rhode Island. First of all, I taught in a Navy School. All of my children, and all the children in the school, were Navy children. It was right next to Quonset. Hoskins Park is what the school was called. That's where I began my teaching service. Then, when they closed Quonset or they began to close Quonset, I knew they were going to close the school, so I transferred to another school, in the same locality, in the center of Wickford, Rhode Island. I spent the rest of my years teaching in the Wickford Elementary School.

C: So you kind of came back to the Navy in a roundabout way by teaching close to Quonset.

F: Yes, I did. The Navy children were an experience for me because they were constantly changing and I was always amazed at the way new students could come into my class and everybody in the class would be friendly with them and take care of them and support them, which was not always true when I got to an all-civilian school. If anyone new came into the class, it was quite a while before that child was accepted. There was a big difference between the Navy child and the other kind of child as far as their acceptance of each other.

C: Isn't that interesting.

F: Another thing that made the Navy children different, they came from all different types of teaching situations and how much time

they spent in a place before they had to move again. This was a little disrupting to the children. But they did the best they could to adapt to the new situation. I was amazed at the strength the children had to be able to do this: constant change of a teaching method; new students in the class; new living facilities. For these young children, it was quite a hump for them to pass over.

C: It was quite a change for them. Quite a transition. They have to be very flexible. Did any of your own children join the Navy as a result of your experiences?

F: No.

C: You mentioned you had two children?

F: Yes.

C: Can you comment on the significance of your Naval career in World War II for you in your life?

F: Not really. I look back on it as being something I'm glad I did. I don't think anybody can know that feeling unless they actually did it. When I tell someone these days that I was in the WAVES, they'll say, "Oh. I didn't know that. Why didn't you tell us that?" I just feel it's something that they can't understand and it's something that I am glad that I did. It was a great experience for me and I think it was the thing to do at the time. I don't think I'd want to be a part of the Navy now.

C: Why do you say that? It's kind of interesting.

F: Well, I guess because I'm so content with my life now and my family. I wouldn't have had the kind of family that I have now if I had stayed in the WAVES.

C: If you had the opportunity to stay in the service.

F: Right.

C: Yes. Because women weren't actually allowed to stay in full time until 1948 when the legislation was passed. So most of them did have to get out.

F: Right. We were offered a chance to be in the Reserve, and I did not take that.

C: Right. Do you have anything else to add? Anything that you remember? Anything amusing or outstanding that suddenly comes to mind?

F: I can't think of anything.

C: Well, thank you very much for your reminiscences, Mrs. Fetter. We will have these transcribed and then we can edit them. Thank you very much.

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