

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

INTERVIEWEE: DORIS DAWSON BERGQUIST

INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

DATE: SEPTEMBER 11, 1998

EMC: This is the first oral history interview with Doris Dawson Bergquist who was a WAVE in World War II. Today's date is September 11, 1998. This is Evelyn Cherpak, Curator of the Historical Collection at the Naval War College. The interview is taking place in my office in Mahan Hall at the War College. Doris, I'm so happy you were finally able to come down to Newport to begin this interview on your career in the WAVES from 1944 to 1947. I want to begin with a few preliminary questions about your background. Where were you born and when were you born?

DB: Cranston, Rhode Island. August 21, 1924.

EMC: What did your father do for a living?

DB: He was a machinist.

EMC: Where was he a machinist?

DB: In Providence.

EMC: And your mother?

DB: She was at home.

EMC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

DB: I had one sister.

EMC: Did she join the WAVES?

DB: No, she went through college and went into school teaching.

EMC: So she didn't join the Navy in World War II. Did you spend your growing-up years in Cranston?

DB: Yes. I've been there all my life.

EMC: Did you graduate from high school?

DB: Yes.

EMC: And when did you graduate?

DB: 1943.

EMC: What did you decide to do after you graduated from high school?

DB: Go in the Navy.

EMC: That was your goal?

DB: That was my goal.

EMC: And why was that your goal?

DB: Always wanted to go in the Navy. When I was young I wished I was a boy so I could go in the Navy. I don't know why. I didn't know anyone. I just thought it would be great to be in the Navy.

EMC: Maybe it was because Rhode Island had a strong Navy presence at that time.

DB: I don't know.

EMC: Did you ever come down to Newport?

DB: No, no, I didn't really know anyone that was in the Navy.

EMC: So you had no friends or relatives there.

DB: By the time I joined all the boys were going away, either drafted or enlisting and just everybody was going.

EMC: That's right. The war was in full gear then.

DB: The war was in full gear, and I had relatives and friends that were prisoners and injured so I really wanted to go more and more as the time went on.

EMC: Did you keep up with the news about the war before you enlisted?

DB: Yes, probably yes.

EMC: When did you first enlist in the service?

DB: October, 1944.

EMC: Did you work at all between high school graduation and then?

DB: Yes

EMC: Where did you work?

DB: The name was Cornell Dublier. They made parts for -- electrical things for use in the war. I worked in the office.

EMC: Was that in Providence?

DB: Yes, in Providence. Just for awhile.

EMC: O.K., so you did have a job before you enlisted.

DB: Well, yes, just waiting to go.

EMC: How did your parents feel about your joining?

DB: Well, I thought my father was going to be a little difficult to sign for me. I had to have someone sign, so I put my mother's name on there, and I found out afterwards my father was prodding her to sign. She was holding back a little, but they were really happy when I did.

EMC: Oh, great!

DB: My father was very proud of me, because everyone had sons that were going and he didn't have any sons.

EMC: Oh, so he had a daughter that was going. Well, that's great. Where did you enlist? Where did you have to go to enlist?

DB: I enlisted in Boston. No, I guess Providence, but I had to be sworn in in Boston. I did my paperwork in Providence and I had to go to Boston to have my physical and be sworn in.

EMC: Right, and any tests that you had to take --

DB: Yes, and I had never been up to Boston from Providence before. It's not that far away. It's only an hour but I had never been to Boston.

EMC: Well, people didn't travel.

DB: I didn't travel. No, people didn't travel.

EMC: How did you get there?

DB: A friend of mine -- we went up on the train and she showed me where to go.

EMC: Oh, so you went with someone. Well, that's good. Was there any publicity about your joining the WAVES in the newspapers.

DB: Oh yes, there was a lot of articles from school, where I worked, from Cranston -- a lot of pieces in.

EMC: Oh good, because they did that in those days. When were you finally sent off for basic training if you enlisted in October of '44?

DB: December 28th, 1944. I was sent to Hunter College.

EMC: And did you go by train from Providence?

DB: Yes.

EMC: With a group?

DB: Yes, with a group.

EMC: And then you reported to Hunter College. What were your initial impressions of Hunter College in New York City?

DB: Great. I thought it was just great being there. It was hard. It was very, very cold and it was hard work.

EMC: You were there for about six weeks, weren't you?

DB: Yes, you get your shots and you think you're not going to live through it. You have to have help getting dressed. You couldn't reach around back. You have marks on your arms for a year afterwards. They

don't look to see where the last shot was. They just keep jabbing, putting one on top of the other.

EMC: Now, you lived in the apartments there, I'm sure, that were converted. How many roommates did you have?

DB: There were seven of us in there.

EMC: Did you keep in contact later with any of these women?

DB: No, I didn't. They all went their separate ways, and I didn't keep in touch with them, but it was interesting because that was the 49th Regiment and it was the first time they had black girls in, and we had one black girl in our apartment and one Chinese girl.

EMC: How interesting.

DB: Very interesting. We had some great discussions.

EMC: Did you get along? Did everyone get along?

DB: Oh, yes, we got along fine, but there were some, in some of the other apartments, that didn't get along. They didn't like having the black girls in with them. I guess they had problems with the girls themselves. They did have some problems, I think. But we didn't. We just had a great time. I always wondered what happened to these girls. They didn't send these girls to the South, I know that. They went other places.

EMC: Because of the problems with segregation down there. Now, you received six weeks of training and indoctrination at Hunter. Do you remember how you felt about the classes you had to take and the classroom work that you had to do?

DB: It was interesting. It was hard. We worked hard, very hard. We had classes every day, marching and exercise. We marched to all our classes and sang all the way. It was very cold that winter -- way below zero. But lots of fun too.

EMC: Did you have homework and tests?

DB: I don't really remember. I don't remember if we did or not.

EMC: How did you feel about the marching and the drilling?

DB: I loved it. I loved that. And at the very end they have your parents come up and they put on a big review in the armory there and I loved that.

EMC: A big regimental review.

DB: I loved that. It was great.

EMC: Oh, good. So you took kindly to that. How did you feel about the discipline of military life? Did you adjust easily to it?

DB: There was no problem.

EMC: Did you participate in any extra-curricular activities while you were there?

DB: In boot camp we didn't have time.

EMC: There was a singing platoon there, I remember, that some people participated in.

DB: We always sang when we were marching. Every time you went from class to class we sang, but I don't remember anything extra.

EMC: Did the Navy provide any recreation or concerts for you when you were at Hunter?

DB: I don't remember any at Hunter. We were just so busy. I mean you were going from morning until night with classes. I don't remember anything there.

EMC: Well, some people did and some people didn't.

Did anything amusing or noteworthy happen in this timeframe at Hunter College, anything outstanding during your training period that you want to comment on?

DB: It was New Year's Eve and we decided we were going to make some noise so from three floors down at 12:00, we threw a pail down the stairs and created a little problem.

EMC: Did you get demerits for that?

DB: We got scolded. I don't think they gave us demerits. It was New Year's Eve.

EMC: But you got scolded...

DB: It was about as bad as you did in those days.

EMC: Right, exactly, very tame. Do you remember the "white glove inspections"?

DB: Oh, yes.

EMC: And you had to keep your room ship-shape for that.

How did you feel about the Navy uniform? Can you comment on that.

DB: I liked it. I didn't care for the gray ones, but I liked the blue ones and the white shirts. I didn't care for the gray ones.

EMC: Was that the summer uniform?

DB: Seersucker.

EMC: Seersucker summer uniform. The Navy uniform was very smart. Well, when you finished your six weeks at Hunter College, did you express any interest for the kind of billet or the kind of training that you wanted?

DB: Yes, I think probably. I'm not sure if we did that when we enlisted or if we did it there. I just don't remember that, but I was sent out to the Iowa State Teacher's College to the yeoman's school.

EMC: But did you say you wanted to be a yeoman? Did you put that down?

DB: I don't remember. I just don't remember when that came about.

EMC: O.K., but you were sent to Iowa State Teacher's College in Cedar Falls.

DB: They went in troop trains.

EMC: And did you go via Canada?

DB: Yes, we went via Canada. It took us about three days to get there. And then they would stop and wait for somebody, and they would go a little way, and back and forth between Canada and the States, and back again and back and forth -- with blacked out windows. It was interesting.

EMC: Do you remember anything outstanding about the trip?

DB: I had charge of the particular car that I was in, and I didn't get much sleep, but it was fun. It was dirty. The train was dirty. They weren't nice cars like they have now. The bunks were three high.

EMC: So you had a sleeper.

DB: It was a sleeper, but you couldn't see. That was my problem. You couldn't see out the window. You had little scratches on there -- you weren't supposed to have anything. It was really hard to peek out through pin holes.

EMC: So you really didn't know where you were. Well, I guess it was wartime and they were taking precautions.

DB: We had a nice porter on there, though, and he kept telling us where we were, and what was going on outside.

EMC: Well, it was a long three days.

DB: It was fun, though.

EMC: When you went to Iowa State at Cedar Falls, how long were you there? Do you remember how many weeks your training was?

DB: I would say about two months. It wasn't very long.

EMC: Two months of training. And what kinds of preparation did you have for being a yeoman? What kind of classes did you take?

DB: Typing mostly. To me it was nothing. I mean, typing, filing and things like that. They had a little shorthand, but nothing really. I didn't like it at all.

EMC: Oh, really?

DB: No, I thought it was a waste of time. I wanted to get somewhere.

EMC: So you knew all that?

DB: Just about all that they were teaching there. I had requested Florida, California or anywhere other than Quonset Point. I said I didn't want to come back. I wanted to see something.

EMC: Yes, you wanted to see the world.

DB: So when I got my orders to Pensacola, I thought that was neat.

EMC: Well, let's go back to Iowa State a little bit. You were there during the winter, weren't you? Probably February and March.

DB: Yes, right.

EMC: And what were your reactions to being in Iowa?

DB: It was very cold and desolate. There was nothing there. We rode in on the bus from Waterloo and all I could see were fields and pigs running around and cornfields. I thought it was awful. Finally, we were inside the garage and you see the college out there. Actually, I started collecting pigs because of that, and I have a big collection of pigs now.

EMC: Oh, figurines?

DB: Yes, all sizes. That was what Iowa meant to me, was the pigs.

EMC: Wasn't that something. Did you have any time for recreation there?

DB: Not particularly. No, I don't remember doing anything real special there. That was another place, though, you go to class most of

the day. When we got to Pensacola, there were lots of things. We had entertainment, but I don't remember there.

EMC: Did you make any lasting friendships at Iowa State?

DB: No, I didn't keep in touch with those girls.

EMC: Everybody went their separate way, I guess.

DB: There was one girl that went to Pensacola with me, and we were friends for quite a while. Then she got transferred somewhere else and we never kept in touch after that.

EMC: Now, you graduated from yeoman's school, and what was your rate at that time? Were you seaman first class?

DB: Third, probably.

EMC: And did you have a chance to go home, back to Cranston, before going to Pensacola?

DB: Yes, because I remember meeting with her. We planned our time so we'd meet and check in at the same time. We thought we'd have a chance to be together.

EMC: Oh, good. So you did go home first. You returned to Pensacola, and what office did you work in there?

DB: The Naval Air Training Base's officer personnel office, and all the officers had to come through there. We had to make out all their reports, their flight reports, their transfers, and anybody coming in had to check in with us. We had every flier, every officer report in there.

EMC: You must have had a very busy job then.

DB: It was busy, very busy, but very interesting and very nice.

EMC: How large was the office? How many people working in it, in personnel?

DB: About five Navy, two or three civilians in it, Then we had the enlisted personnel way down at the other end of the building and they had a lot more people in their office.

EMC: How many WAVES were working there?

DB: Three WAVES and one WAVE officer and then one was in charge, one Captain.

EMC: Right, and it seems from looking at your pictures that you were a very close and friendly group.

DB: Great group, really great group. We all fit right in together and it was really, really nice. And those are the girls I've kept in touch with my whole life, even the boss there. We had several different bosses, but the last one -- I've always been close to him and his family.

EMC: Can you tell us their names?

DB: Captain Sinton was the commanding officer at that time. When we first got there, Commander Bjork, Robert Bjork, a huge man, I thought he was about seven feet tall, was the commander.

EMC: And the last captain you said you were friendly with?

DB: Yes, the last one was Robin E. Larson. He was a commander at that point. I still keep in touch and visit with him and his family. I babysat for his daughter when I was at Pensacola.

EMC: Oh, really!

DB: Yes, I was very friendly with his wife. We used to go out for the day. We've always kept in touch. Then they came to Newport. He was here at the War College and they had another little one by then. I came down and stayed with that one for a week while his wife went away, and I took care of the baby and his older daughter who was 15 and his mother who was 80 something. I came down and stayed with them. Still good friends after 56 years.

EMC: Isn't that something -- amazing.

DB: And we still keep in touch. His wife died about two years ago now, but just last weekend I wrote to him. He was 80 and I sent him a card and he responded, but I hear several times a year from him. He's in Norfolk and we get together and go back over all these things. It's really fun.

EMC: Oh, yes! What kinds of socializing did you do with this group? What kind of events did you go in for?

DB: Well, they had lots of beach parties down there. The beaches were gorgeous in Florida, and there was a big, big pool --. I guess the enlisted couldn't go there. It was just for officers. It had to be an organized thing, so our boss used to organize a party, and we'd all go there and have a good time. We'd have a cookout and use the pool. They'd reserve the pool.

EMC: That's great!

DB: But, not just with the bosses, the officers. There was just so much to do on the base. No matter how much time you had there was always something to do.

EMC: Well, what kinds of things did they offer you?

DB: Horseback riding. I used to get up in the morning, early, before work, and go horseback riding with one particular girl, and then we'd come back and shower and go to work. And another girl did nothing but go to movies, so if you wanted to go to a movie you would go to the movies. One of my other friends liked the beach. Well, I wasn't too much of a beach person, because I burn too much, but we'd go to the beach a lot. Oh, there was everything, anything you wanted to do. There was tennis courts right in back of the barracks. We had time, and there was always somebody who wanted to do the same thing. You could always find somebody.

EMC: Oh, that's good!

DB: We had a great group of girls.

EMC: Now did you live in a WAVES barracks?

DB: Yes.

EMC: And can you describe what that was like? Was it wooden? All other buildings were colonial -- red brick .

DB: Yes, they were temporary barracks. They were put up for the cadets and the WAVES. They were put up for the war. They were just wooden barracks, that's all. Every once in a while we'd have a hurricane scare. They had great big hooks on the side of the building

and one on the lawn cemented in. They'd come over here and they'd chain the building down in four places, back and front.

EMC: Isn't that interesting. Now, inside of the building, was it just bunks all in a row, or what?

DB: Oh, no, separate rooms. There was a shower room on each wing, but there was separate rooms and two bunks on each side. We never did have four in our room. We only had two in our room the whole time when I was there, so that was kind of nice. You had your own separate side. We had lots of cockroaches, though. We had "white glove" inspections all the time, so the place was so clean, and nobody ever had food in there because of the roaches, but cockroaches were there. We had to keep our underwear and stockings in glass jars. We'd go to civilian friends and asked them to save mayonnaise jars and we'd look in the drawer and they'd all be lined up with jars with clothes in them. Anything silky they'd eat, and they always ate the uniforms. They always ate the part that buttoned over; they never went to the other side where the buttons were. They always ate there, so it would be like moths.

EMC: Isn't that strange.

DB: My roommate and I used to come in at night, after dark, and we'd take our shoes off outside. We'd open the door, turn on the light real quick and throw our shoes at the cockroaches on the wall. That was a sport, to see how many you could get.

EMC: What living conditions!

DB: It was funny, but it wasn't from dirt. That's just the kind they are. I used to tell my father about them, and he didn't believe me. I

pinned one to the wall with a hat pin and I sent it home to him -- about 2 inches long.

EMC: That's how big they are in Florida. Were you affected by the heat at all, because there was no air conditioning?

DB: No, it was hot, but no. You'd get sunburned. Our shirts used to burn across the back, the white shirts, from the sun, just walking from place to place. The sun was very strong, and you'd get burned.

EMC: Did you find your work challenging?

DB: Yes, very,

EMC: And interesting?

DB: Very interesting, yes.

EMC: Was there anything you didn't like about it?

DB: No. It was very interesting, and I think we worked together so well, and we were such good friends, all of us, that it was very nice.

EMC: Very harmonious, then. Did anybody famous or interesting pass through your office?

DB: Yes, Ted Williams. He was not nice. He was...

EMC: ...difficult...

DB: ...a real smart Alec, and he once told me that...I'd always come to Boston to see him, but I never would. He said he took his commission in the Marine Corps, 'because there were fewer of us and it made him more outstanding', and that didn't go over too well with me.

EMC: Anybody else? Any movie stars?

DB: No, there were quite a few ball players that came through, but I can't remember the names right now, but I just remember him.

EMC: Yes, and his remarks.

DB: I don't remember. Not many of them came through. They may have because later on you hear ... and think, 'gee, I remember that name', but at the time they were just starting out, and young.

EMC: You mentioned when we were talking before that you used to have coffee with your boss, and you met some important people through that.

DB: Yes, we happened to be in a very nice place, and the commander of the base liked to have the women there. He wasn't one of those that didn't like them around. You know, some of them didn't like the women. They resented them, but he was very, very nice. The first one was Captain Sinton, and he'd have us in every morning to have coffee with him, and he'd have the silver service and all, and we thought that was kind of nice, and we'd just chat. You didn't think you were with anybody special.

EMC: And he was CO of the base.

DB: Yes, and one morning we knocked, and we started in and there was someone sitting in there, and we excused ourselves and started out... 'no, no, no, come in, come in'. It was John Nicholas Brown, and he was Secretary of the Navy. He was from Rhode Island, and the first question anybody asked was 'where are you from?' so we had a nice chat with him. Another time Averell Harriman was there. He was also Secretary of the Navy at that time ... at another time, I mean, they changed often. It was nice. We just met a lot of people like that.

EMC: It seemed very relaxing.

DB: Very relaxing.

EMC: Not stuffy.

DB: No, and you worked better like that too and we worked a lot.

EMC: Oh, you did? I was going to ask you.

DB: They kept us very busy. Well, the war was over, so it was very busy. Everybody was getting out, and bringing them back and discharging them, and all.

EMC: Yes, processing them after the war was over. Did you have to work on Saturdays?

DB: Yes, we did some and lots of nights too. That was o.k., because we missed the inspection, didn't have to stand out in the hot sun for inspection.

EMC: Yes, did you still have to march and drill when that was over?

DB: No. We had one WAVE officer, that when we went through inspection, she'd walk around and look at you and she would put her fingers together like scissors, and that meant your hair was getting a little long in the back. It wasn't supposed to be below your cap or hitting your collar, you know, and she'd just walk around with her fingers going together, so we always liked to miss the inspection.

EMC: Oh, that was one way to miss it.

DB: We had fun when I had my 21st birthday, and we were working late and all of a sudden we looked down the hall and we could see lights

coming through the glass door, and it looked like a flame. You know what it was? My boss, the WAVE officer in our office ... her boyfriend who was also an officer came walking in with a birthday cake for me for my 21st birthday.

EMC: Oh, how nice.

DB: He's still ... they're very good friends and I go to see them every year in Vermont, and we've been good friends for 50 years. She died this past year -- I lost a very dear friend -- we did so much through those 50+ years.

EMC: That's fantastic. Right.

DB: I've kept very close with them. Also my roommate from Pensacola -- we've seen each other almost every year. She lives in California.

EMC: Well, that's amazing. Yes, that sounds great. Well, it sounds like you were very well treated.

DB: We were very well treated. The work was interesting and fun and didn't matter how long you had to work because the conditions were so good. I never heard anybody complain about working late or anything. And yet, when you had time off there was so many things to do. Real good friends. No nonsense, no nonsense in there at all.

EMC: Yes, no harassment.

DB: No harassment, oh gosh no. I think of all that goes on ... we never thought of it. We didn't have to think of things like that.

EMC: Yes, no discrimination, then. Was there anything you didn't like about your assignment?

DB: No, I can't think of a thing.

EMC: Your living arrangement were satisfactory? When you were down there did you date Navy men?

DB: Yes.

EMC: Did you go out individually or in groups?

DB: Both -- my roommate and I had a couple of fellows we went out with a lot. We'd usually go "dutch treat" because they didn't have anymore money than we did, and we'd go out to dinner. We'd go places that we wouldn't go by ourselves. When we'd get our pay ... I just found a paychit ... seven dollars I'd take out every week, and that would be for the week. It's all the money you needed. :

EMC: Oh, and what did you do with the rest?

DB: We'd leave it in. It's like a bank, we'd leave it in. We'd get the seven dollars and then we'd go, probably Friday or Saturday night, we'd go into town to the only hotel there was, and have dinner in the hotel. There was only one hotel, and it was a nicer room, and nicer place, you know, so we'd go in and have dinner and poke around the city. We didn't go to the movies, because you could go free on the base. We'd just look around in the shop windows and stuff and go back to the base. A couple of other places that we'd go, and that was a chicken place, Bartels chicken, and another place for shrimp and it would be a dollar for this big plate of shrimp. And we'd go to those places and we'd go with the boys, because they were off the main, and we didn't want to go by ourselves.

EMC: And you didn't have cars. You'd have to take a bus.

DB: No cars -- we'd take the bus -- but we'd usually go with them. On the base there were fellows that we'd go with, different things you wanted to do, but it wasn't dating like it is today. Today you go with somebody twice and you're engaged, or something, I don't know.

EMC: You were just friends.

DB: Just friends. No fear of anything, no harassment nothing like that.

EMC: That's great.

DB: I went out with one officer, once, and we weren't supposed to go out with officers, but I did go out with one officer once. We went out to dinner and that was it.

EMC: No, you were not supposed to fraternize.

DB: No. We had one girl in our office that was very quiet, lovely, lovely girl. We loved her. We never knew what she did. She never did anything with us very often, so all of a sudden she came in one day with this gorgeous diamond ring, and we were so surprised, and we said 'who are you engaged to' and she told us, and it was an officer up in flight training who was so smart that we worked at him, to try to make him make a mistake. We could name an officer and we had to look it up, where he had gone and so forth. Instead of looking it up, we'd go up and ask him, trying to trick him. We'd give him a name and we'd say 'do you know anything about so and so,' and he'd say in about one second, 'yes, he went to Jacksonville in June of something or other to take flight training and then he was going...'. He had a photogenic mind, I guess. He knew everything. You couldn't trick him, and we didn't know what in

the world we'd ever said about him, and here she's got this ring, and we looked at one another and our mouths dropped. It was just awful.

EMC: Now was she enlisted?

DB: She was enlisted, and she was going with him. We said

"hey, you're going with this officer all this time?" and she laughed.

EMC: Probably she wanted to keep it quiet.

DB: Yes, and he joined a country club, so that they could go to the country club, and she'd go off base ...

EMC: And not be seen.

DB: Yes, and then at one time, we could wear civilian clothes and she would wear civilian clothes.

EMC: Oh, really, could you wear civilian clothes.

DB: Yes, at the very end you could, yes, but we didn't. We didn't do it, but she had some things, right at the very end, but they had a place to go. They had a pool there, and they had golf, and they'd go there to dinner, so that's about the only place they dated. They married and stayed right there in Pensacola, and she's still a friend of mine.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes, and she's still there?

DB: She's still there, yes, and he died. Oh, my friends are all dying; he died about five years ago, but she's still there.

EMC: My, isn't that something. What a story. Did you keep up with news about the war during your time in the service? •

DB: Oh yes, we knew what was going on, yes.

EMC: Did you write to your parents or your friends?

DB: Write to them?

EMC: Write letters, yes.

DB: Oh, yes, a lot.

EMC: Do you have any of these letters?

DB: Oh, I don't know.

EMC: Did your parents save them?

DB: My mother saved some of them, yes.

EMC: Because they would be a wonderful addition to our collection, because you would be describing your everyday existence there.

DB: The only one I can think of that would be at all interesting was the one going from...out on the train to Cedar Falls. I kept that one with a diary...told funny things, but I don't know if I could find it.

EMC: That would be great. Yes, we could copy that. That would be wonderful.

DB: The others I don't think would be interesting. I wasn't a great letter writer.

EMC: How did you celebrate on V-J Day, August 15, 1945? It's still a holiday in this state.

DB: Yes, we were there. I don't remember. I don't know. I believe we were working.

EMC: Remember anything outstanding about the war?

DB: I had lots of friends and relatives in the service -- there were lots of letters. Some wounded -- brother-in-law taken prisoner -- much worry. It was the end of the war, and we were busy, but I don't remember of us doing anything special. We must have on the base, but I thought of that oftentimes when you hear about celebrations, but I don't seem to remember. Must ask my friend in California. She remembers things better than I do.

EMC: Did you ever have a chance to meet Mildred MacAfee?

DB: Yes. She was a lovely person.

EMC: Can you tell us about that. Did you meet her when you were in the WAVES?

DB: No, I met her at a convention that we had. We had conventions, and these conventions were through the Navy. It was a separate group, but they had to have access to a Navy base, because they assigned some Navy person, for a year, to work with these people, to organize it and to work with them. It was temporary duty.

EMC: Yes, to set up the convention.

DB: For the convention, yes, with a committee, and they ...now was it Irene Walenski that you were just talking about. She was on that committee. She knows a lot about that.

EMC: And you attended many of these Navy sponsored conventions?

DB: Yes, and they were at different places, San Francisco, Chicago, San Diego, Washington, Norfolk. Their 50th was at Norfolk. The two I

mentioned also attended -- my roommate and WAVE officer -- wonderful times -- about every 2 or 3 years.

EMC: Right, I remember that. What was the highest rate that you attained?

DB: Yeoman third, because nobody in our office would go up for a rating because we would have to transfer from that office, and nobody wanted to leave. I mean, it was very little money. We had enough money -- we didn't need any more money, and we wanted to stay where we were.

EMC: Oh, so you didn't put in for a promotion ...isn't that interesting.

DB: No, so you know we loved our job.

EMC: Now, you stayed in the service until what time?

DB: '47, and then I had to get out.

EMC: Yes, a good year and a half. Were people leaving your office.

DB: Yes, we all left about the same time. We had to get out. We could have reenlisted; that was USNR, and we had to reenlist in the regular Navy, and, just one girl ... she wasn't in our office, she was a friend of ours. She said, "I'm not getting out. I'm going to reenlist right now, and I'm going to transfer," so she transferred to ... I'm not sure what they called it ... she was like a hostess on a plane. She went out to California, and she used to fly from California to Alaska, so she could stay in there longer.

EMC: Right, it was a flight billet, maybe.

DB: That was one they could stay, yes, so she stayed in for quite a while after that, but then she finally had to get out. But we all had to get out, so we all came home, the five of us. We said that we'd all reenlist, and we'd all keep in touch, and go back and hope that we could get together. Well, by the time you get home and you have your leave you hear, "you've been in now, you've done your thing, and it's time to settle down and get a job." So we never got back.

EMC: Yes, so that was the end of that.

DB: That was the end, and I should have reenlisted before I came home, and I've always been sorry that I didn't.

EMC: Oh, that's interesting. How did you feel about leaving the Navy when you finally ...?

DB: Well, I cried all the way to Washington with another girl. The bus driver kept saying, "Are you o.k.?" We sat right in back of him, and he could hear it. "Are you o.k.?" "Yeah, we're o.k." We'd stop and get off the bus, and he'd say, "Come on, let's go have a cup of coffee", and we'd say "No," and so we hated going back.

EMC: Yes, that must have been a big ...

DB: We went, five of us, back to Washington with this girl, as far as Washington, and she went on to Virginia. We spent the day in Washington together, and we left for home.

EMC: Is that where you were discharged?

DB: No, we were discharged in Pensacola.

EMC: Oh, in Pensacola.

DB: We came up on the bus, and stopped over in Washington, and I came home from there.

EMC: Did you receive any medals for your service?

DB: The American Theater and Victory Medal.

EMC: Campaign medal?

DB: Just the regular ones, nothing special.

EMC: Yes, that everybody got.

DB: They weren't giving out too many of them, whatever they were, I didn't see them.

EMC: Did you feel that the WAVES had a strong sense of esprit de corps, camaraderie?

DB: Yes, very at that time.

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

DB: Very.

EMC: No problems?

DB: I didn't have any problems. I didn't see any problems anywhere.

EMC: Did you know of anybody who was discharged for any reason?

DB: Yes, there were some that were discharged. You never knew the reason really. They just all of a sudden disappeared.

EMC: I see.

DB: Especially in boot camp. All of a sudden somebody was gone.

EMC: Do you feel that the WAVES experience changed or redirected your life in any way? What impact did it have on you as a person.

DB: Well, I think it made me a better person. It was something that I really wanted to do. I was independent and I was doing what I wanted to do. Like I said, I'd never even been to Boston before. When I was in service I traveled everywhere. On the weekend we'd go off somewhere, and I went everywhere. I was very proud to be a WAVE in the US Navy. I believed I was doing something important during the war. I am still proud and awhile ago talked about it at a church group that was telling younger people what World War II was like.

EMC: Where would you go on these weekends?

DB: Well, we'd go to Mobile, Alabama. We'd go to Sarasota, Florida, Winter Park, Florida and just places that weren't too far. I've been to New Orleans. We'd get three or four days sometimes and we'd go like that.

EMC: Yes, now you mentioned when we were talking before about buying bus tickets, which is kind of interesting. Could you tell us about that.

DB: Yes. There were no black girls in Pensacola. There were black boys, but no black girls were sent to the South. I don't know where they put them after boot camp, but there were no girls there, but there were black boys. Now that I think about it, they were all in a barracks by themselves. They were segregated there too, the boys. But when we'd be going into town and perhaps going off for a weekend, say Mobile, or something like that. The ticket counter would be blacks on one side and whites on the other, which disturbed me, coming from the North, and I was not a bit prejudiced, and it bothered me. We'd stand there and we'd

buy our tickets and go get on the bus, and these same fellows that came in on the bus with us from the base would be standing there, and the man wouldn't turn around and sell them tickets. That bothered me terribly, and the poor guys, they'd turn around and they'd have to go back to the base. They'd miss their weekend. So, another time when we'd go, I'd get on the bus and I'd ask them where they were going, and I'd collect all their money, so we'd get up to the bus terminal and I'd go in and buy five tickets to Mobile or five tickets to somewhere else, and the man would look at me kind of funny and he'd say, "You got a lot of friends," and I'd say, "Yeah, a lot of friends," and I'd buy the tickets and then I'd go give them to these fellows. I hoped I wouldn't get in trouble, but I just thought it was so mean, because they were the same as I was. I mean, they were working on the base. Why shouldn't they be able to go, and probably they were going home, a lot of them were from the South.

EMC: Yes, oh that was quite something.

DB: I didn't like segregation. That bothered me a lot down there.

EMC: Oh, that's an interesting comment.

DB: That really bothered me.

EMC: And you saw a lot of that, I guess.

DB: Yes, but to me it was just meanness. It was just mean. You know, they couldn't go in certain stores, they couldn't go in certain restaurants. That lasted a long time, too. They had to sit in the back of the bus. Sometimes the bus would go right by them at a bus stop.

EMC: It did. Did you have any contact with any civilians during ...

DB: Black civilians? Yes, a civilian friend had a cook that we loved. We brought her things.

EMC: No, I just mean civilians on the whole when you were in Pensacola.

DB: Oh, yes, yes, we had civilians that worked in our office, even. Not right in my ... in part of it there. There was one particular lady; we used to go to her house quite often to eat. She would cook dinner for us. That was kind of nice to have a home cooked meal, you know, and she had a colored lady; now I'm saying "colored", it was colored then. Now it's black I guess.

EMC: Right.

DB: And, she was just like a colored mammy that you used to see, big, fat and a lovely, lovely lady, and she'd cook for us, and she was so nice to us. We'd have her come in and eat with us, and she'd say, "Oh, I can't do that," and we'd say "Yes, you can." She ate with the other people, but she felt when we were there she couldn't. So she'd come and eat with us, so she thought we were pretty special, because we let her eat with us. We used to get things for her at the base, little things. When I left I gave her my shoes, those ugly black shoes that we had to wear, and I gave them to her and I couldn't have given her a million dollars that she would have appreciated more. I heard from her--I didn't hear directly from her for a long time, but I know she must've died by now, but she was a nice lady.

EMC: Oh, so you did have some contact with the civilian world.

DB: Yes, we had some civilians. Friends.

EMC: And they treated you well?

DB: Oh, yes.

EMC: No problems with antagonisms between them in the office?

DB: No.

EMC: Do you think your service in the Navy made you more independent and self reliant?

DB: Absolutely, yes. The first time we had leave, I said I was going to fly. I didn't care...if my whole leave...I was going to fly, and so I put in to fly home at Quonset. Well, there was no planes going anywhere near Quonset, so I did finally get a hop to Cleveland, Ohio. Then I had to wait there, and I got a hop to Washington, and from there I got to come home on the train, so I used up several days coming home, but I flew, and I was determined I was going to fly. We went up in a little Beechcraft, seven of us, pouring rain when we left Florida. We had to go out onto the field, and a guy came out with an umbrella. I was the only girl; the rest were all sailors, so he said "have you been up before?" and we all said "no". None of them had, so he said "well, we've got a thunder shower. Would you like to go up in the clouds, the thunderclouds", and we said "oh sure", so we went in the thunderclouds, lightning all around us, it was pitch black in there --- kind of interesting, raining. We thought it was fun.

EMC: Yes, bouncing around up in the sky. Was that the flight to Cleveland?

DB: Yes. Then we had to wait for another one. Sometimes you could get one right through to Quonset, but that's the only time I did that, but that's what I wanted to do.

EMC: That's great. So you had a new experience.

DB: The rest of the time I came home, I came on the bus or train to Washington, and I'd spend the day in Washington. I knew a fellow there who was the personal pilot for Averell Harriman, Secretary of the Navy, and he'd come down to Pensacola from Washington, (that's how I knew this fellow). So, when I'd come up to Washington I'd spend the day in Washington, poking around by myself, went everywhere, walked everywhere, which you wouldn't dare to do now, and I'd meet him when he got through work and we'd go out to dinner, and go to a movie. Then I'd come home on the 12 o'clock train. I'd be home at eight in the morning.

EMC: Well, that's great. It sounds like you had a very good time. What did you do when you returned home to Cranston after you were discharged?

DB: I went to work for Encyclopedia Britannica. I worked in the office there.

EMC: Did you stay with that job for awhile, at Encyclopedia Britannica?

DB: Yes.

EMC: Did you meet your husband during the war?

DB: No.

EMC: You met him after. Did you maintain any service friendships when the war was over?

DB: Yes, I still see them quite often.

EMC: Yes, as you said.

DB: Once a year or so. My roommate is in California and we get together quite often. I have another friend, my WAVE officer, she lives

in Pensacola, Florida. She went back there after they retired and live there. They have a place in Vermont and I see them every year. These are my best friends.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Did you attend WAVE reunions after the war?

DB: Yes, yes I did.

EMC: Do you belong to any WAVE organizations?

DB: The WAVE National Rhode Island Unit #118 Ocean State right now, and there's another one -- National Convention of Navy Women. Well, they had it for their 50th, the 50th was the last one. It was great. They had wonderful speakers -- VIPs. Every 2 to 3 years in a different city.

EMC: Do you belong to the state unit, the Ocean State #118 WAVES?

DB: Yes, I do.

EMC: What would you say was the significance of your Naval career for you and your life?

DB: I think it made me a better person. It certainly made me independent. I loved it, just loved every minute of it. I think of it all the time, different things, and it's never left me. I think of the people and the things I did, and it's brought a lot of joy to my life. Sometimes people think I'm nutty, because I always have stories about different things that happened, but it was such a wonderful, fun time, and yet we worked so hard, and that part of it you kind of block out. I mean, you don't think about the hard part of it; like boot camp was so hard and you felt like you're never going to make it, but that part goes and you just remember the nice parts of it. I felt like I was

really doing something worthwhile for the war. I was very proud to be a WAVE.

EMC: That's good.

DB: I really liked it and I like keeping in touch with people. I'm real sorry they don't have these conventions anymore because I really enjoyed that. I love the military part of it, lots of pure military.

EMC: Yes, lots of ceremony and formality, which is very nice.

DB: And when we had these conventions, the people they had to speak, these congressmen and senators and astronauts were so friendly and talking to you like they were just nobody. I mean they treated you so well. That was what impressed me. They were no better than you were. It was really great. At the 50th they treated us so royally, like these women who have become admirals now. This was not possible for us. We started out -- we started the whole thing. It was fun listening to that, get a little praise I guess, but it was nice. It made you feel real good. I always felt that I did something worthwhile. Everybody I knew, every relative and friend was in the service somewhere. I just felt that I did my part too.

EMC: Right, you did your part in World War II.

DB: It was nice.

EMC: Well, that's good. That's very, very positive. Do you have any other tidbits or stories to add.

DB: Can't think of any. They just pop in every once in a while.

EMC: Right, well that's great. I thank you very much for coming down today and sharing your memories, your very positive, up beat memories of service in the Navy.

DB: It was nice, fun to do it. Fun to go through all those old papers and albums. It brought back a lot of things.

EMC: Oh, yes, memories. Now you're a great supporter of the Navy today. Tell us how you support them.

DB: The Navy Memorial. I'm a charter member there, and I belong to the Quarter Deck Club. I give every month. They just take it out of my checking account, and I'm a charter member of the new Women's Memorial. I've given quite a bit there too. I've given quite a lot to both of them, actually.

EMC: And you're registered in both areas, so they've got your service record and know where you are.

DB: Yes, oh yes. I thought it would be fun to be a part of something permanent. Most people don't get a chance at that. I mean, they have all these monuments and things, Vietnam Memorial, these people are all gone, but when you're alive and you can be part of something when it is being built. I thought that would be kind of fun. I hope that my grandchildren, some day, will be kind of proud to go and see it. I'm on the log in both places.

EMC: That you served.

DB: So far nobody has seen it, but I had planned to go next weekend actually, but we had to change plans. I was going to take my daughter down to see it. I have been to the Navy Memorial several times and as a member of the Quarter Deck Club was invited to a reception and concert a

couple of years ago and was introduced as a World War II WAVE. Kind of nice.

EMC: Did any of your children join the Navy?

DB: No.

EMC: But you talked about your experiences to them so they know about it. I've talked about it so much and have so many pictures. Something seems to come up almost daily.

DB: Kind of anxious to see the memorials, you know, you're a part of it.

EMC: Oh exactly, that's great.

DB: They've seen pictures but they want to see it.

EMC: Well that's fantastic. Thank you so much, Doris.

DB: You're welcome.

INDEX

Oral History 244 – Doris Dawson Bergquist

- Brown, John Nicholas, 18
- Cranston, Rhode Island, 1-2, 33
- Discrimination, racial, 6, 29-31
- Friends, keeping in touch with, 13-14, 20, 33-34
- Harassment, 20
- Harriman, Averell, 18, 33
- Hunter College, *see* WAVES, Hunter College, training at
- Iowa State Teacher's College, *see* WAVES, Teacher's College, training at
- MacAfee, Mildred, 25
- Navy Memorial, Washington D.C., 36
- Pensacola, Florida, 12
- Post-war employment, 33
- VJ day, 24-25
- WAVES
 - barracks, Pensacola, 15-16
 - civilians, interaction with, 31
 - cockroaches, 16-17
 - dating, 21-22
 - dating officers, 22-23
 - discharge from, 27-28, 33
 - effect of serving in, 29, 32, 34-35
 - enlisting in, 3
 - esprit de corps, 28
 - Hunter College, training at, 5-8
 - medals, 28
 - organization, reunion, 34 *see also* reunions
 - parental reaction to joining, 4
 - pay, 21
 - promotion, not competing for, 26
 - publicity about joining, 5
 - racial integration in, 6
 - reasons for joining, 2
 - reenlisting, post-war, 26-27
 - reunions, 25-26, 35
 - Teacher's College, training at, 9-12
 - time off, 14-15, 19-20, 29, 32-33
 - uniform, 8-9
 - working in Pensacola, 13, 17, 19
- Williams, Ted, 17-18