

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE WAVES

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NO. 73

MARGARET MURPHY REGO

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

INTERVIEWEE: MARGARET MURPHY REGO

INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

DATE: FEBRUARY 24, 1999

EMC: This is the first oral history interview with Margaret Rego. She lives in Tiverton, Rhode Island, and I'm interviewing her at her home on 311 Judson Street. Mrs. Rego, I'm very pleased that you were able to be interviewed this morning on your career in the Navy in World War II. I want to begin by asking you a few questions about your background before you entered the WAVES in 1944. Can you tell me where you were born and when you were born?

MR: I was born in Fall River, Massachusetts on July 7th, 1918.

EMC: And what did your father do for a living there?

MR: He worked for the city of Fall River.

EMC: Did your mother stay home?

MR: Yes. She did.

EMC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MR: I had two brothers and one sister.

EMC: Did you graduate from high school in Fall River?

MR: No. I didn't. I left high school because I was moving to Boston on the last day of my junior year in high school. Then I went on to live with my sister in Boston.

EMC: Oh, I see. Did you work when you were in Boston?

MR: No. I didn't.

EMC: And you must have left high school in the '30's then?

MR: In the '30's. I would have graduated in 1937.

EMC: Okay. So you left around 1936. Did your family have any Navy connections at all?

MR: None at all.

EMC: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked on December

7th, 1941?

MR: On that day I had been living with my brother and his wife. I was listening to the radio and I heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. And my first thought was that we were at war. My brother was in another room, and I asked him if he had heard that announcement and he said, "No. What is it?" I said, "We have been bombed. The Japanese have bombed Hawaii, which means we are at war. It'll just have to be declared. That's all." I remember that vividly.

EMC: Yes. I think most people do.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Their reaction to the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Did you keep up with news about the war before you enlisted in the WAVES?

MR: Oh, yes. Because I had many friends and so did my family of people in the service. And oh, yes. It was a very interesting thing, but not so when we started to lose them when they were killed.

EMC: Yes. Were your brothers in the war at all?

MR: No. They were too old--past the age.

EMC: Oh, of enlistment. Yes. How did you hear about the WAVES?  
Do you remember how you heard about them?

MR: I had been hearing about the WAVES. I was working at the time in Fall River, and I heard about enlisting. They had a recruiting office on South Main Street in Fall River for the different branches of service. I had thought what it would be like. But on an impulse one day I stopped in to the Navy recruiting office and talked to them about enlisting. And before I knew it, I had signed up to enlist in the WAVES. I came home, and the family was spellbound. They just didn't know what had happened to them. But I never regretted a day from that day until the day I retired from the service. Yes. I loved it.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Why did you pick the Navy over the other services? Because the Army had the WACS and the Coast Guard had the SPARS.

MR: Yes. There was just something about the Navy. I had a friend that had gone into the SPARS. And she was after me--that was the Coast Guard--to go in. I said if I was going to go into anything it would be the Navy.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Well, can you tell us the date that you

enlisted in the Navy in the WAVES?

MR: I believe it was June 1st in Boston. Then on June the 6th, it must have been very shortly after in Boston, they had a little ceremony. I'll have to say that. And they said that I would be hearing from them to be sworn in. I didn't know what it was going to be. But as it turned out, it was June the 6th, 1944, the day of the invasion.

EMC: D-Day.

MR: Yes.

EMC: So that's the day you were sworn in in Boston, Massachusetts.

MR: Yes.

EMC: How did your parents feel about your decision to join the WAVES?

MR: My parents had been dead quite a few years.

EMC: Oh, oh.

MR: Yes.

EMC: I'm sorry. I didn't realize that.

MR: That's alright.

EMC: Did your brothers and sisters have anything to say about it?

MR: No. My brother that I lived with just felt it was just another thing I wanted to do, too. I didn't know whether it would improve me or not, but just a change that I wanted to do. And my sister also went to enlist, but she was not accepted. She's more delicate than I am.

EMC: Oh. Well, both of you tried it. That's great. Why exactly did you decide to enlist in the WAVES? Was it patriotism or travel? Or what motivated you?

MR: I think what motivated me most of all was that, as I have said, I lived with my brother. I took all the ins and outs of enlisting and what it would be like, and knowing that I would have to conform. I decided maybe it would be a good thing for me to enlist in the service. Maybe it would be beneficial in many ways. I would meet different people. I never thought of travel as one of the things. Patriotism? Yes. I think that was foremost in my mind at the time. It was to everyone. Everyone was concerned.



Now I'm going back a long time. Maybe today it isn't like that. But during the war, knowing it as I do, everyone was putting themselves up for the war effort. I thought perhaps it would also give my brother and his wife time to be alone.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Those are good reasons. Well, now you were off for your basic training. And where did you go for basic training?

MR: I went to Hunter College in New York. And that's where I took my training.

EMC: How did you get there? Do you remember? Did you get there by train, with a group or alone?

MR: Yes. With a group. I left from Providence, Rhode Island on the train into New York. We had people with us telling us where to go. Yes. In a group.

EMC: Had you ever been to New York City before?

MR: Oh, yes.

EMC: Oh. Good. So it wasn't unfamiliar.

MR: Not where Hunter College was. But, yes. New York City.

EMC: Right. How did you react to the training that you had there?

MR: I loved it. There were times when my bones ached even though I was young. But I loved being out. And I loved the marching. And I loved the music. And most of all I loved the girls. I thought they were wonderful. Yes. I had a wonderful group of girls.

EMC: Well, you must have had a number of roommates.

MR: I think there was something--one, two, three, four--six in a room.

EMC: And I assume you lived in the converted apartments.

MR: Yes. We did. Yes. At Hunter College. We took our training at the college, you know, tests and things like that. And the grounds were just beautiful. We took our outside training and marching--

EMC: And you were there in the summer then. Weren't you?

MR: In June.

EMC: Yes. In June of '44.

MR: And July. Three weeks of July.

EMC: Right. Did you adjust easily to the discipline of military life?

MR: Very easily. Maybe I was a disciplined person. My father died when we were all very young. My mother died when I was ten.

EMC: Oh.

MR: So I guess I was about six when my father died. So we did lose them very young. So it was a case of discipline. Anyway, I had a wonderful childhood. But, you know, I was growing up with someone that disciplined me but loved me, you know. I guess that the training was there.

EMC: Yes. Absolutely. Did you like the classes that you took?

MR: Very much so. And all the instructors were wonderful.

EMC: Were they women or men?

MR: They were women.

EMC: So you had WAVE instructors.

MR: Yes.

EMC: That's good. And you had to march everywhere, I assume.

MR: Everywhere. Around the parade grounds. We never went out of the grounds at Hunter College, never marched out in the street or anything like that. But it was a big place. And they would march us in the field where dignitaries would come. And there were bandstands up and everything. The band was there. We'd march to class.

EMC: That's great.

MR: A little bit of a ham, I guess.

EMC: Did you have white glove inspection of your room?

MR: Oh, yes. That's a laugh in my life that I will never forget. Yes. We did. The Commander was very strict, which I'm sure she must have had to be. Oh, yes. White glove inspection.

EMC: Did you pass them?

MR: Always. I have a little to talk about.

EMC: Oh, sure. You tell us about it. It'll be amusing.

MR: This was at Hunter College. And I love to sing. I don't have a voice, but I sing. And so this Saturday morning we're at inspection. And the Commander comes in with white gloves on, you know. And we passed. The coin bounced off the bunk. And the closet doors were opened. And the drawers were pulled out. Everything was fine. But you were not supposed to speak until she had left the floor. And we were all going into New York City because New York City was a haven. You could go anywhere and everything was free in New York. So we were all going to get on the train and go in. And we had been warned--don't ever speak until the Commander has left the floor. Well, I thought she had left the floor, and I said, "Everybody grab your coats and let's go." I had no sooner turned my back when she was standing in the doorway. She said, "May I ask who said that, please?" And I said, "I did." And all the girls, "I did, I did." She said, "You all couldn't have. It was only one voice." So she said, "Seaman Murphy--your privilege for going to New York has been restricted, as has your roommates'." Oh, I could have died. Then she said, "You will take paint brushes, and you will all go into the empty room on the side, and you will paint that room for the afternoon."

EMC: Oh, no.

MR: Needless to say, as they picked up their little buckets with the brushes--if you ever open your mouth again, we'll put the paint brush in. But everyone laughed and there was no hostility.

EMC: Yes. Hard feelings.

MR: But I have never forgotten that. Maybe because I felt guilty about the girls.

EMC: Yes. That's a riot. That is something amusing that happened. What did you think of the food at Hunter? Do you remember the chow?

MR: And, of course, I wasn't used to a tin plate. But everything was clean. But if you were hungry enough you ate it. If you had enough money, you went to White Tower and got a cheeseburger, you know.

EMC: Oh, I see.

MR: Although you had to eat it at Hunter College. I'm talking about when I was in Washington on my own, you know.

EMC: Yes. Did you have any limited time off--any breaks on the weekend when you were there?

MR: Yes. We did. Every weekend we had off, outside of when we got ourselves into trouble and had to stay back.

EMC: What did you do on the weekends?

MR: We always went to New York City. And there was a beauty parlor there that would do the girls' hair if you wanted to spend some time, which was lovely. And your nails. And free of charge.

EMC: Oh, nice.

MR: And then there was the canteen where you went and could have lunch and your coffee and soda.

EMC: Was that free, too?

MR: Yes. And if you went to buy anything, there was always a little taken off. You never paid full price. It was a wonderful time to be in the service. My husband said there was no place like New York during his stay either. So it must have been something they did. You could go to the shows free.

EMC: Oh, really?

MR: Yes.

EMC: Did you go to any?

MR: Oh, yes. I loved the movies. And there were no stage plays. But we could go to any movie we wanted to see, providing we were back in time. We had a time limit that we could go and come back and have to be signed in, you know, by that time.

EMC: Yes. Well, you sound like you had a good time then.

MR: I did. I loved it.

EMC: Oh, that's great. What did you think about the Navy uniform?

MR: I loved it. I thought it was lovely. And the thing that I liked most of all was that everyone wore the same thing. There was no "my dress is better than yours or prettier than yours." I knew that wouldn't happen in the service. But I just liked the idea. I like the idea of children being in uniform in schools too.

EMC: So you had the summer uniform, didn't you?

MR: The summer uniforms.

EMC: The seersucker?



MR: Yes.

EMC: And then you got the issue for the winter uniform.

MR: Yes. Navy blue was the winter. And the seersucker was for the summer, the blue and white seersucker.

EMC: Right. That was a nice uniform. Well, when you finished your training at Hunter, I assume it was about eight weeks, wasn't it, that you were there?

MR: Yes.

EMC: Did you express a preference for the kind of assignment you wanted?

MR: Yes. Everyone could. You had to go, and you had to sign up as to what you wanted. I had never been away from home--had never been like to California or any place like that. And while I was pretty good as an individual--not being afraid to speak up if I was lost someplace in New York--I didn't think I wanted to go to the other side of the country. So I put in for the Boston area anywhere. So I was given Washington.

EMC: Oh, that's good. You didn't put down Washington though, did

you?

MR: Pardon?

EMC: You did not select Washington.

MR: I didn't ask for Washington. But I'm glad that that's where I ended up.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Well, leave it to the Navy. They just have to assign you where you don't want to go, even if you express a preference.

MR: All the moans at the desk, you know. Oh, God. I asked to go to California--they sent me to Newport.

EMC: Yes. That's about it. That's what I meant. Well, after you finished your training, did you go directly to Washington, D.C.?

MR: Directly to Washington.

EMC: And did you travel alone?

MR: No. I traveled with the group of which I was in charge.

EMC: And what was your rate at that time? What was your job

rating?

MR: We were just Seamen.

EMC: Okay. You were Seamen.

MR: Yes.

EMC: And where were you assigned in Washington?

MR: I was assigned to the Navy building in the Office of Naval Operations.

EMC: Okay. To the general headquarters--Naval Operations.

MR: Yes.

EMC: And what was your job there?

MR: It was clerical. And I say this--it was confidential and secret material. I can tell you this. Yes. We were trained, of course, there. And they were looking for any information that might be coming in in letters from the fellows that might tell if it fell into the wrong hands where these people were.

EMC: Oh, I see.

MR: In my reading during the day, if I thought it doesn't look right, you know, the letter goes from one subject to the other and it just doesn't seem right, our Commander was always there for us to go to. He was wonderful. He would be the judge of it. But if it was something so common that you knew this was wrong, you know, then you took care of it.

EMC: Okay. Did you blot it out? Did you ink it out or something?

MR: Yes. We blotted it out so that it was just one long black line.

EMC: Line. Yes. So you actually worked in censoring letters.

MR: Yes. It was in the Office of Naval Intelligence--Naval Operations.

EMC: Okay. Yes. That's what I wanted to get straight. You must have reported there about September '44. Was that it? Mid-August?

MR: I finished training in August, the early part. I think it must have been about September 4th because we traveled right straight through. There was no stop over or anything, you know.

EMC: Yes. So did you do that for the time that you spent in

Washington?

MR: For the remainder of the time. Yes.

EMC: Okay. Did you like this kind of work?

MR: I loved it.

EMC: And why did you love it?

MR: I liked it because it seemed to give me a sense of responsibility. They instructed us as to what to look for and how important it could be. And above all, never, never leave anything on your slide drawer. Put it back and lock it up. So I felt a little important.

EMC: Right.

MR: And I did it because, you know, it was clerical work. I loved clerical work and typing. Yes.

EMC: How many women were in this office doing this? How many WAVES?

MR: Oh, I would say maybe twenty.

EMC: That's quite a contingent.

MR: Besides the fellows, the sailors.

EMC: Oh. There were sailors, too?

MR: There were sailors there. Yes. Maybe about four.

EMC: And then you had a Commander that you worked for, a Navy Commander.

MR: Commander Bartlett. Yes.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Did you find many letters that you had to censor yourself?

MR: If I did, they were brought to my attention immediately. If something got by me that I thought wasn't enough of--a man writing his wife or something like that, you know--that went by me without my seeing it. Maybe if you got two a day, that was it.

EMC: Oh, yes.

MR: See, these are all letters that weren't coming from any office or anything.

EMC: Right.

MR: These were letters that were being passed by. And they were sending them there because they felt there was something in them.

EMC: Oh, okay. So they had been read before.

MR: Yes. They had been read before. And many of them were censored before.

EMC: Oh, okay.

MR: And they were just going to get another--

EMC: Opinion. You were reviewing. Okay. So this is good material. The fellows must have been amazed to find that all their letters were being read.

MR: But, of course, how would they know?

EMC: They wouldn't know. But I mean that's a horrendous job, when you come to think of it.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Reading all the mail from the various fronts.

MR: And everyone did that. This girl I'm telling you about--my friend from North Carolina. She sat at the table with me, and she--

EMC: Yes. Did you find this work interesting, or routine, or boring?

MR: Yes. I found it very interesting. Very interesting.

EMC: Good. Did you have to work on Saturday?

MR: No.

EMC: It was a five day week.

MR: Oh. Excuse me. I had to work on Saturday if I had the duty in the Navy Department building to be in the offices that were being cleaned by the cleaning people.

EMC: Oh, I see.

MR: Yes. Saturday and Sunday. We were assigned.

EMC: Oh, I see.



MR: And you had better make up in your mind you were going to be there. And some evenings.

EMC: Oh, really.

MR: Yes. We were the ones that watched them. They picked up a paper or maybe took it, you know.

EMC: Oh, yes. You were supervising the cleaning help, in other words.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Yes. Oh, okay. That's good.

MR: Or anything that might have been left out before they got, you know, before they got to see it.

EMC: Oh. Interesting. Where did you live during this time frame? Where did they domicile you?

MR: When I first arrived, I lived in a hotel in Washington, D.C. I had a roommate. There were not enough facilities in the barracks to put up new incoming WAVES. So I was with a roommate at the hotel in Washington, D.C. near the Capitol.

EMC: Oh, good. Good. Now did you stay there for a long time?

MR: I stayed there maybe three months. And they gave you a substantial tip to buy your meals and everything.

EMC: Right.

MR: Because there was no way to eat there. And then they had enlarged the barracks, and we went to Virginia.

EMC: Did you go to--

MR: Arlington, Virginia.

EMC: Arlington Farms then? Oh.

MR: I stayed there all the time in the same room and everything else.

EMC: Did you have a roommate there?

MR: Yes. Oh, everyone had a roommate, just one. But, yes.

EMC: Good. So then you had to commute to work.

MR: Yes. By bus.

EMC: By bus. Good. How were you treated in this job by your superiors? Were you well treated?

MR: I had no problem. The only thing was that a lot of the girls complained of civilians feeling that maybe the girls in the service were getting a little more privileges than the girls that worked. What do I want to call it? You know, your CF and 2F and 3F.

EMC: Oh, the regular civil service.

MR: Civil service.

EMC: Yes.

MR: But I think that applies everywhere. You could see it in the civilians when they would talk to us. My friend was one. She could be antagonizing. The same way as my work when I came out of the service. You try to get along with anybody. But she would fight with everyone.

EMC: Oh. The girl from North Carolina?

MR: Yes.

EMC: Oh. What a riot.

MR: But I did not have any trouble. And when my husband and I went back on our honeymoon, we were invited to dinner at the girl that was over me, Commander Bartlett was. But she was civil service. She was very high up in civil service. And if I had any questions or anything I would go to her rather than Commander Bartlett, you know.

EMC: Oh, okay. So you had a civilian supervisor that was an intermediary supervisor.

MR: Only for--

EMC: Yes. Questions.

MR: Little things. Commander Bartlett was head of the office, even over her.

EMC: Sure. So you really didn't feel any discrimination at all.

MR: No. I didn't. No.

EMC: And you were well treated. Was there anything about this assignment that you did not like?

MR: Yes. That was the leave. My first Christmas I had gone out and I had bought presents, because they said I could have a leave of absence for Christmas. I had them all wrapped and everything, and two days before Christmas I got a call that my leave had been cancelled.

EMC: Oh, no.

MR: That I needed to work in the Navy Department. My heart was broken. That was the only time I said, "I don't know whether--" Other times I went and I was able to travel. No. That was the only time I was disappointed, my first Christmas.

EMC: Oh, yes. Oh. That's too bad.

MR: And so was the family.

EMC: Oh, yes, of course. You had to stay in Washington.

MR: But I think that was the only time I can ever remember being disappointed. I may sound like oh, boy--she's too good to be true. But I really did love the service.

EMC: Well, a lot of the girls did. Most of the women that I've interviewed said they did love it.

MR: Oh. I loved it. Yes.

EMC: I wanted to ask you what you did for recreation in D.C.

MR: Well--

EMC: With your time off. You did have some time off.

MR: Yes. We did have time off. There were shows. I don't remember Washington having stage. But you could go to the stage--I mean to the shows. Then they had canteens. You could go and dance, you know. And they served refreshments. Unless you went yourself, you know, to restaurants and for dinner or something like that. Because, you know, Washington was blacked out during that time.

EMC: Oh, it was?

MR: Oh, yes. And it was a very restricted--you know, it was a bad time.

EMC: Yes.

MR: Of course, New York was darkened. Even Fall River was darkened when I came home. But not like Washington.

EMC: Oh, I see.

MR: Washington was very, you know, they were oriented to look at you and look if you looked suspicious or something like that.

EMC: Sure.

MR: At that time--which is understandable.

EMC: Yes. Nobody has ever said that it was blacked out. I'm glad you mentioned that.

MR: Yes. Sometimes when we would come out for, you know, that was one thing I didn't like. Because I wasn't too brave. But when we would have night duty and we would come out, it would be very dark. Oh, I didn't like that.

EMC: No.

MR: I would go under the, you know, if they had like a marquee that might have been hidden. Now it wasn't jet black. But, see, you didn't have anybody because you were the only one on duty. And while people were coming and going all the time from the Navy Department, there wasn't anybody that was standing with you waiting for the bus. And as soon as I saw the bus, I would run. But it would stop right outside of the barracks, too.

EMC: Oh, that's good. Did anything exciting or amusing or interesting happen during this time frame on your job? Or in the dormitory, the barracks?

MR: It's amusing. But I don't know whether it's the story to tell about Peg and her father. My friend, she really is a wonderful person. But she, as you said in the first part, you know, what did you go in for? She went in I think because of the glamour of being in the service, and she was going to wear a uniform. Her father was a banker. And she was interested, but she wasn't interested. And, you know, she'd be saying-- She would tell me, "I'm going to get out." I'd say, "I don't know. Why did you come in? You're not in that long and you're going to get out? Who's going to get you out?" It was money talking, you know. And I said, "I don't want to listen to you." She said, "Well, my father's going to get me out." I said, "That's good. I hope it's very soon. Can't be soon enough to see you go." So that was the way I would talk to her. And the girls kind of felt, oh, you know, she's too much. I don't want to be bothered. But I saw something in that girl that I said, "No, you know. Maybe she's looking for, you know, she's telling this stuff to let you know that she has money and that." But anyway, when we were leaving-- our training was over and we were going to Washington--I was called into the office and told that I was going to supervise this group of girls going to Washington, D.C.



EMC: Oh.

MR: I was to make sure that they got on the train and they got off it. And all reported to the same barracks. Regardless of what they say to you, you tell them that you are in charge and that, if necessary, you would call an officer. I didn't know she was on the train. We're on the train. And I had the list. I had to go several times back and forth through the train calling out the names. So I got to her seat. I hadn't seen her in boot camp. This is the beginning of the story. She used to tell me this in Washington. She was on that train going to Washington. And she said, "Oh, God. Listen to the way that Yankee called my name out." Something in me--I don't know what it was. I went up to her and I said, "You listen to me. I'm only going to say this once. If I have to correct your name you tell me. You don't tell the train. You tell me that I've pronounced your name wrong. And I don't want any more trouble from you even when we get to Washington. You remember that." She said, "Alright, Yankee--if that's the way you want it." This is when we became--we were the best of friends.

EMC: Oh, what a riot.

MR: She always calls us damn Yankees. Yes. Always calls us damn Yankees. And she called a couple weeks ago to see how my husband

was. And so when we got to the station I said, "Everybody off, and get in line and hop to." She says, "I hope I'm not going to be in the hotel with you." I said, "Oh, I hope not. Either I'll commit suicide, or I'll go AWOL or whatever they call it if you're going to be with me." But she was in another barracks. But she disliked the service so much. I used to say to her, "You know, give it a chance." "Oh, I'm not used to people like this." I said, "I'm not used to people like you." But we went home. She took me to her home in Virginia--lovely. And we have written to each other all these years--cards. And I've called and she's called me. And as I say, when we went to Florida, we stopped in. Best of friends.

EMC: Oh, that's amazing. Yes. It started off as kind of a clash of personality.

MR: I said, "I'm going to straighten her out. If I'm going to straighten anybody out, it's going to be her."

EMC: Oh, that's good. Well, did you ever room together?

MR: No.

EMC: No. You never did.

MR: No. Never roomed together. I roomed with a girl from Texas.

EMC: Oh, that's good. When you were in Washington, did you have an opportunity to date Navy men or men in the service?

MR: Most of them were the guys I dated. But they were Navy men. Yes.

EMC: So Navy men.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Oh, good. Did you meet your husband there?

MR: No. We knew each other before. We went out before we went into the service.

EMC: Oh, okay. Now were you writing to him during this time?

MR: All the time. Yes.

EMC: And was he in the Army or Navy?

MR: He was in the Air Force.

EMC: Oh, the Army Air Force. And where was he stationed?

MR: In the Pacific for four years. He had one leave, and he never came home again. He was at Guadalcanal and the islands.

EMC: Oh, he's got a story to tell then.

MR: Yes. I guess so.

EMC: That's a great story.

MR: He loved it, too.

EMC: Oh, he did?

MR: He did. Yes.

EMC: Now he must have flown then.

MR: Oh, yes. Oh, he can tell you stories about flying with the pilots. And he was a Staff Sergeant. And he took care of the planes.

EMC: Oh, I see. Yes.

MR: So he always had to go up with them--not to fight. But like if they were transporting, he'd have to go with them on the plane.

EMC: That's quite something. Well, you were writing to him during this time. Do you have any of those letters?

MR: No.

EMC: Oh, that's too bad. His to you or yours to him?

MR: No, I don't. See because when I come home I went to live with my brother and his wife again. And I don't know how this will end up. But I was due for discharge in January of '46. And they had called me for an interview. And I said, "Oh, I'm surprised. Because I didn't expect it right now. I haven't had time to think about re-enlisting." They said, "Well, supposing we give you two days to see if you would like to re-enlist." I said, "That's fine." I went back to the barracks and I'm reading. And someone said, "Murphy--telephone." I said, "Oh." They said, "From Washington State." I said, "Washington State? I don't know anybody in Washington State." So I went, and he said, "Peg?" I said, "Everett, where are you?" He said, "I just arrived in Washington State," he said, "and I'm on my way to Washington."

EMC: Wow.

MR: And I said, "Don't. I'm coming home. Go straight home and I'll see you at home."

EMC: Oh, that's fantastic. So you both were discharged about the same time.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Yes. In early '46.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Oh, great. Well, I want to double back a little bit to your stay in Washington still at Naval Intelligence. Did you ever have a chance to meet Mildred McAfee Horton, who was the Head of the WAVES? Mildred McAfee was her name then.

MR: That name sounds very familiar.

EMC: I wonder if she ever inspected or came through or you had a chance to meet her.

MR: The name sounds familiar. But I've heard it, and I think I'm associating it with the wall in Washington that they want to put up on the WAVES.

EMC: Oh, yes at Arlington. Right. The WIMSA Memorial.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Did you ever have a chance to go to the White House or ever see Franklin D. or Eleanor?

MR: There were no tours during the war in the White House.

EMC: Oh, okay.

MR: No. The only time that--I watched his funeral.

EMC: Oh, you did?

MR: Yes.

EMC: I wondered.

MR: Yes. That was quite a sight to see.

EMC: Yes. It must have been.

MR: Yes.

EMC: And how did you react to his death?

MR: Oh, I felt badly. I cried. Yes, I cried.

EMC: A lot of emotion then.

MR: Yes. And the funeral was so solemn, you know, that it brought tears, of the horses--that lone horse, you know, the boots facing--

EMC: Yes.

MR: I think everyone in Washington was on the street that day. Yes.

EMC: Well, the next big event fortunately after his funeral was VJ day in August '45.

MR: Oh, VJ Day.

EMC: Can you tell us how you celebrated then? What Washington was like?

MR: Oh, Washington. My sister was with us. And it was a mad house, everyone kissing one another and grabbing a hold of one another. And everyone out again--out of the offices and every place like that. It was wild. That's the word I could describe.

EMC: Yes. Did you do anything special?



MR: No. My sister was visiting me from Boston. We just got into the middle of the crowd.

EMC: Oh, that's good. Great. Well, what was the highest rate that you achieved in the Navy before you were discharged?

MR: It would have been Yeoman Third Class.

EMC: Yes. Yeoman Third Class.

MR: And that's what I was studying for. You could not get a rating every month. You had to take a test and study. See, I was in quite awhile before I even found out--oh, maybe close to a year--before I found out you could do this.

EMC: Oh. They didn't tell you.

MR: No. They did not tell me. And that's when I got-- I said, "I'll take this home as a memory." Because it was what was given to me. I was taking the test. But you had to go several times a week to take this test for, oh, I think six weeks then. I don't know what today is like.

EMC: Well, I think it was hard to improve your rating and get promoted then.

MR: Yes, it was.

EMC: Because there wasn't that many slots.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Were you able to survive on the pay that they gave you? Did you save anything?

MR: No. I did not save anything. But if my sister needed a ten or something, I had an extra ten to send to her or something. But the pay was-- I never thought much about it at my age to begin with other than I had this money to spend. I was being fed. I was being clothed. And I had a roof over my head. And I had this to enjoy--buy what I wanted. I think it was thirty dollars, if I'm not mistaken--twenty-five, thirty dollars.

EMC: Well, that's not much today.

MR: No. Not today.

EMC: It would go further then.

MR: Yes.

EMC: How did you feel about leaving the Navy?

MR: Well, I felt badly. And if my husband had not come home, or future husband at that time, I would have re-enlisted.

EMC: Oh, good. Because you had the opportunity to re-enlist.

MR: Yes. I did.

EMC: A few of the gals did. Not that many.

MR: And no group of mine--no friends or anything. They had served their time. They wanted out. But I would have re-enlisted.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Did you feel that the WAVES had a strong sense of esprit de corps and camaraderie working together as a group?

MR: Yes. I do.

EMC: Did you feel that they were a smoothly run organization?

MR: Absolutely.

EMC: Being a very new organization.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Did you know anybody who was discharged at all for disciplinary reasons or for infractions of any sort?

MR: No. Not in the time that I was in--not around me or the girls or anything. No. They were a lovely group of girls.

EMC: And you met people from all over.

MR: All over. I went to Texas.

EMC: Oh, you did?

MR: Yes. With my roommate that I was with when I went in. And then she was transferred to another barracks, and I got a new roommate in and she got a new roommate where she went. And they kept enlarging the barracks all the time, and they kept moving people around, you know. I never knew of one that was discharged.

EMC: Oh, that's good. That's good. Did the WAVES' experience change or redirect your life in any way?

MR: I think a great deal.

EMC: And in what ways?

MR: I think in the ways of--like being in the service you took commands and you took discipline. And I think it made me a better person. I feel that my education from the service went a long way. I was more secure when I come out of the service than I had been when I went in.

EMC: Did you feel that it made you more independent and self-reliant?

MR: Yes. Absolutely. And I think it would have to. Because you're away from home and away from the people that you love. And you're making your own decisions, whether they be good or bad. So, therefore, that has to be a sense of responsibility. If you make a mistake, you've made a mistake. You have to correct it. But I really do. I think it was a great help to me.

EMC: Oh, that's good. And do you feel it broadened your horizons by meeting all these new people from all over?

MR: Yes. Because not to bring religion into it, but I was of one religion and they were of several religions. But it made no difference. You had to accept what they were, you know. There was no--how shall I say it? They were all white--now if you want to erase that--in the barracks. There were no colored people. So you didn't have a chance to live with them, which I don't think would

have made a difference. But by the same token, some of these people were brought up in a different time in a different place, you know. I brought two girls home with me from Washington for a weekend to my brother's. And one of the girls stood all the way from Washington until we came to Providence because she would not sit with the colored fellows.

EMC: Oh, really?

MR: She stood all that way.

EMC: Oh, my heavens.

MR: So that's what I mean. But I had never had that problem with tolerance. My mother had brought us up not to, you know, we didn't call anyone down. We accepted people for what they were.

EMC: Oh, that's good. That's good. Did you feel that what women were expected to do career wise changed when the war was over? Do you think more women went into the work force and wanted to do so?

MR: Oh, I think so. Yes. When I came home, my experience gave me a better job.

EMC: Good.

MR: Oh, I used to think, oh, it would be nice to work there, and it was in the Office of Social Security.

EMC: Oh, for the government.

MR: Yes. And I said I don't know if I'm prepared to work, you know, on this. I did fine. And it was a wonderful job. But it was a step higher than what I was used to, you know.

EMC: Was this in Fall River?

MR: Yes.

EMC: Did you attend any WAVE reunions after the war was over?

MR: No. But because there never was. I would look in the paper and try to see. Because my husband said, you know, you go. If I can take you someplace. But I never once read of any. Just recently, maybe a few years back, of a reunion. And Peg had called me to ask me--how about our going? And I don't know what at the time prevented me from doing this. But I would have loved to have gone.

EMC: Do you belong to any patriotic organizations or WAVE organizations?

MR: No. Again, because there was nothing when I came out of the service.

EMC: There is now. There's an Ocean State WAVES Group.

MR: Oh, I'm sure there must be.

EMC: And there's WAVES National, which is the national group. Well, just to wrap up. Where did you settle after the war was over and when did you marry?

MR: I went back home to live with my brother. And Everett and I resumed dating at that time. And one night he said to me, "You know, Peg, I think with the war and all we've lost a lot of time together." I said, "Good. When do you want to be married?" He said, "Whatever date you want." I said, "September 9th." And we were married on September 9th, 1946.

EMC: Oh, good. So that was about nine months after you got out of the service.

MR: Yes.

EMC: Did you have any children?



MR: No, we didn't.

EMC: I was going to ask you if you talked about your WAVE days to your children. Did you continue working after you were married?

MR: Oh, yes. I worked right till the retirement. I worked for a big furniture company in Fall River. Then from there I went to the Tiverton High School, and I worked there twenty some odd years until I retired.

EMC: What did you do at Tiverton High, may I ask?

MR: I was Assistant Librarian.

EMC: Oh, great. Yes. So you were working in the library like Barbara does.

MR: Oh. And when everybody heard of my eyes they said, "Oh, the one that loves to read so much."

EMC: Oh, that's great. Well, you have kept in touch with one of your WAVE friends.

MR: Yes.

EMC: The gal from North Carolina that you met, which is good. I find that many women have.

MR: Yes. And we used to write different ones. But all of a sudden that stopped. I don't know their life or whatever.

EMC: Right. Do you have any other comments to make about your WAVE career and your feelings about it?

MR: No. But I'll tell you. If I was the age now that I was then, I certainly would--if my life was, you know, the way it was then, I would go into the service. It's an experience. I know there's restrictions and everything, but I would do it in a minute again.

EMC: Well, that's good. That's a very positive comment. Well, thank you very, very much for your reminiscences. We'll get this transcribed.

MR: Oh, you're welcome.

EMC: And off to you.

MR: It's been nice reminiscing.

EMC: Oh, yes. It is. It's great.

MR: It's great.

EMC: Thank you.

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