

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE WOMEN MARINES

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MARY J. ZIEGLER PION

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THE HISTORY OF THE WOMEN MARINES

INTERVIEWEE: MARY JEANNE ZIEGLER PION

INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: U.S. MARINE CORPS (WR)

DATE: JULY 29, 1999

EMC: This is the first oral history interview with Mary Jeanne Pion who lives in West Warwick, Rhode Island. My name is Evelyn Cherpak. Today's date is July 29th, 1999. Mary Jeanne was a member of the Marine Corps (Women Reserve) for a year and a half. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you where you were born and when you were born.

MJP: I was born in Williamson, West Virginia on November 18th, 1921.

EMC: What did your father do for a living?

MJP: He was a newspaperman. He worked on the presses.

EMC: Interesting. And did your mother work outside the home?

MJP: No, she never did.

EMC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MJP: I had two brothers and two sisters. Also, I had two half-sisters and one half-brother, all deceased.

EMC: Where did you spend your growing up years?

MJP: In Marietta, Ohio.

EMC: And where is Marietta near?

MJP: It's on the West Virginia border practically. It's in the southeastern part of Ohio.

EMC: Did you graduate from high school there?

MJP: No. We went back to Williamson, West Virginia in my sophomore year, and I graduated there in 1939.

EMC: What did you do after high school?

MJP: I went to business college.

EMC: And where is that?

MJP: In Columbus - Bliss Business College.

EMC: Oh, Columbus, Ohio.

MJP: Right.

EMC: What were you preparing to do?

MJP: Be a secretary.

EMC: How long was that course?

MJP: I believe it was 18 months.

EMC: Oh, a good year and a half. And did you graduate from the business school?

MJP: Yes, I did. While there, I was president of the Alpha Iota sorority, a national honors sorority.

EMC: And where did you go to work after that?

MJP: At the F&R Lazarus Company in Columbus. It's a huge department store--in the Research Department.

EMC: Oh, famous Lazarus. I've been there, too.

MJP: Oh, you know it.

EMC: Oh, yes. My sister goes there all the time. And what did you do in the Research Department?

MJP: I was secretary to the Research Director.

EMC: Oh, how interesting.

MJP: It was very interesting.

EMC: I wonder what kind of research they were doing.

MJP: Well, they used to get in reports from all different big department stores all over the United States. And the Price Administration would send us, you know, literature and stuff. And there was always something going on.

EMC: Oh, I see. Yes. So you enjoyed that. Did you stay there until you joined the Marine Corps?

MJP: Yes, I did.

EMC: Was your family in Columbus then?

MJP: My mother and father. My brother was there, too. But I had a sister in West Virginia and one in Nevada. And my other brother had passed away a few years before.

EMC: What did your father do in Columbus?

MJP: He worked on the Columbus Dispatch.

EMC: Their newspaper.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Very good. Well, you said you joined the Marine Corps in 1943.

MJP: Right.

EMC: What month was that?

MJP: March.

EMC: How did you hear about the Marine Corps?

MJP: I saw a notice in the paper, or an article in the paper. And I wanted to get away from being a secretary. And I just liked

the Marines. And since it was just beginning, I thought, well, this is a good way to get in on the ground floor.

EMC: Oh, that's interesting. Why did you like the Marines?

MJP: I don't know. I just did. Because it was different, probably.

EMC: Yes. It wasn't the WAVES or the WACS. And I guess Women Marine Reserves had been more or less established in November of '42, but really got on the ground floor and began in about February '43. Well, let's double back a little bit and talk about the war even before 1943. Do you remember what your reaction was to the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

MJP: Well, yes. I was listening to the radio. And, in fact, I took down notes in shorthand as the broadcasters came over and gave different things that had happened when this was bombed and that was bombed. So it was just unbelievable. But I had made notes on it.

EMC: So you were shocked, I guess.

MJP: Oh, that's for sure.

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

enlisted?

MJP: Yes, I did.

EMC: Well, that, I guess, was the news of the day.

MJP: That's right.

EMC: Well, how did your parents feel about your joining the Marine Corps?

MJP: Well, they were usually pretty good if I wanted something and they thought it was okay. My brother was in the Army. So they said--Okay. Give it a try if that's what you really want.

EMC: Okay.

MJP: They hated to lose another one, but I had to leave home sometime.

EMC: Right. Where did you go to enlist?

MJP: To Cleveland, Ohio.

EMC: That's where the nearest recruiting center was. Do you remember if you had to follow any special procedures when you

enlisted? Did you have to take tests?

MJP: We had a physical. I think that's really the only thing I remember.

EMC: You didn't have to take aptitude tests or anything.

MJP: We took aptitude tests in boot camp at Hunter College.

EMC: Okay. Were you sworn in then?

MJP: Yes. We were sworn in then and waited for our active duty status.

EMC: So you were commissioned. And what was your rate then?

MJP: Private.

EMC: Was there any publicity about your joining the Marines in the Columbus Dispatch?

MJP: Well, the Columbus Dispatch themselves had run an article on it, and I went to the Marine Recruiting Office to report in.

EMC: Oh, they did?

MJP: I don't know where the article is or what happened to it.

EMC: That would be great to have.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: On your joining.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Wow!

MJP: Because my father and my brother both worked there.

EMC: Oh, they did. So that was unique. A lot of the papers did that in those days.

MJP: Right. They had a gentleman in the department that corresponded to the service people. And he was always writing to me and asking me to send him information.

EMC: And did you?

MJP: Yes. But where they are?

EMC: And so did he write up articles based on what you told him?

Do you know?

MJP: I don't think so. The only article I remember was when I got married to another Marine. And then he had written that up because of my husband's duty and everything.

EMC: Oh, I see. Well, that's very interesting. You were accepted. And you had to wait for active duty status. And when did that come about?

MJP: I think it was the 23rd of March. It wasn't too long. I was surprised that it was so fast.

EMC: Yes. How did they feel about your leaving Lazarus?

MJP: Well, they didn't like it. But my boss--but the assistant boss--had just enlisted in the Army, and he had gone, too. So they weren't too happy.

EMC: Everybody was leaving for the war effort.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Well, you left in mid March. And where did you go for basic training?

MJP: To New York at Hunter College.

EMC: Did you travel by train?

MJP: Yes, we did. And someone met us at Union Station.

EMC: Did you go by yourself or with a group?

MJP: By myself. But I did meet one other girl on the train who was going to the same place.

EMC: Yes. There weren't that many I guess.

MJP: No.

EMC: That many Marines going to New York.

MJP: No.

EMC: Well, when you got to New York, you were met at the station, as you said, and taken to Hunter College. And this is where you began your training and indoctrination. How long were you there?

MJP: Well, we went there the end of March. And we went to Washington to National Headquarter--I mean to the Marine

Headquarters. I think it was the first of May.

EMC: Oh. So you were there maybe six weeks or so.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Can you describe your living conditions at Hunter College?

MJP: Well, actually they were apartment buildings. Because they had been using those as dorms for the students. And they just ended up putting bunks and everything in them for us. We had to march daily. We had to drill. We had to go to classes--map reading and such. Had to get all our shots.

EMC: Oh, fun. Yes.

MJP: And that was about it. We were kept pretty busy.

EMC: Did you enjoy the marching?

MJP: Yes, I did really.

EMC: Were you bunked with Marines solely?

MJP: Yes. There were just the Marines in our building.

EMC: Oh, I see. Okay.

MJP: There were WAVES there, too. We'd see them marching, but we were all together.

EMC: All the Marines were quartered together. Well, that's good. Do you remember if you found your classes at all challenging or difficult? What were they like?

MJP: They weren't difficult, but they were all challenging. But I loved something like that, so I really enjoyed it.

EMC: Good. Good. Did you adjust easily to the discipline of military life in your training?

MJP: Yes. I think so.

EMC: Tell us about the Marine uniform. Did you get the Marine uniform?

MJP: Such as it was. We didn't get them till we were just about finished with our training. And then they came in in spurts. Some had shirts, some had jackets, some had skirts. When we had pictures taken, the ones who had full uniforms would be in the front row. And I remember the first pass we had was on Easter Sunday that year. And we could go into the City. We went to the

Empire State Building to see the sights, and nobody knew who we were. They didn't recognize the uniform. In fact, a lot of people thought we were Western Union girls.

EMC: Oh, for heaven sakes.

MJP: They used to say--What are you? a Western Union girl? No. We're Marines.

EMC: And did you have your complete uniform?

MJP: Yes. I had mine.

EMC: And was that the green?

MJP: Yes. The green.

EMC: That was your winter uniform, wasn't it?

MJP: Yes.

EMC: And your summer uniform was--

MJP: The summer work uniform was green and white striped seersucker with a "pork pie" style hat. And then the dress uniform was white with the regular Marine hat.

EMC: Oh. That's a very nice picture of you in the white. Anyway, you just had, as you say, very limited time off. And that was the only leave you got--the Easter Sunday leave.

MJP: That was the only leave we had.

EMC: Did anything amusing or noteworthy happen during the six weeks training period that you can remember?

MJP: Not that I can think of offhand. It was all so new, everything was more or less exciting, you know.

EMC: Did you make any lasting friendships with any of the women that you lived with during that six week period?

MJP: Yes. Quite a few. We kept in contact for a long time. In fact, one in Wisconsin I'm still in contact with.

EMC: Oh, that's fantastic. That is so true of so many of the women during that time frame.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Whether it was at boot training or in their regular assignment, they kept in contact with people. When you were at

Hunter, were you asked at all what kind of billet you wanted to be in?

MJP: No. They just put you where they wanted you.

EMC: Okay. Because sometimes the WAVES thought they had a choice. Well, where did they decide to put you?

MJP: Like I say, we were in these apartment buildings.

EMC: No. I mean for your next assignment.

MJP: Oh, I'm sorry.

EMC: Where did they send you?

MJP: Well, we were shipped to Washington, although the Headquarters was in Arlington. But they had just built a lot of housing along the Potomac in Virginia for what they considered to be an influx of women government workers coming into Washington. And our barracks weren't finished yet. So we were set up in those buildings, which was called Arlington Farms. We each had our own little room and everything which was very nice. It was like a big, long motel. And then when the barracks were finished up across from the annex that's where we went. Henderson Hall it was called.

EMC: Oh, I see.

MJP: But then when we became a Sergeant we could move out into apartments if we wanted to. We got a cost of living expense.

EMC: Oh, really. Yes.

MJP: So I moved in with two other Sergeants for awhile.

EMC: Oh, yes. You lived on the economy, on your own eventually. Well, that's great. What I did ask you was--I guess the Marines didn't ask you what kind of a billet you wanted. They just put you where you wanted to go.

MJP: Right. Yes.

EMC: And what was your billet and where were you assigned in Washington?

MJP: To Marine Corps Headquarters in the Discharge Department, Certificate of Discharge Department.

EMC: And were you doing secretarial work?

MJP: Secretarial work. I put in twice for transfers, but my

superior wouldn't release me.

EMC: And where did you want to be transferred to?

MJP: The first one was radio school. The second was aviation machinist's mate. I loved to work with my hands. And I really wanted to go there.

EMC: That would have been great.

MJP: But they wouldn't let me go.

EMC: Well, you were too good, I guess.

MJP: I don't know why. But I was very disappointed.

EMC: Oh, dear. But they just wouldn't release you to go to that particular school.

MJP: No.

EMC: Because those are unusual ratings, especially the aviation machinist and mechanic. I've only interviewed one WAVE who had that rate.

MJP: Oh.

EMC: And she was stationed in Tennessee. Well, there you were trying to escape secretarial work.

MJP: And that's where I ended up.

EMC: That's where you ended up. Did you need any other training to do the kind of work you were doing in the Discharge Department?

MJP: No, not really.

EMC: And how long were you there?

MJP: I was there from May 1st until I think it was the 18th of August or later August of '44.

EMC: Okay. So you were there about--

MJP: About 18 months.

EMC: Fifteen months or so.

MJP: Yes. Fifteen months.

EMC: Did you enjoy your work?

MJP: Yes, I did. Yes. Very pleasant.

EMC: Did you work with other women in the Marine Corps?

MJP: Yes. We were all Marines. The head boss was a civilian, but the rest of us were all Marines.

EMC: Was the boss a man or a woman?

MJP: Woman.

EMC: Okay. So it was kind of a female contingent there.

MJP: Well, there were some male Marines still there, too.

EMC: Oh, I see. What kind of work did you do actually--typing, filing?

MJP: A lot of typing. I don't remember doing any filing. But we used to have to look up records for the ones who wanted another discharge--they had lost theirs or something.

EMC: Oh, I see.

MJP: And then it was mostly just routine office work.

EMC: Did you work Monday through Friday?

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Did you work any weekends?

MJP: No. Not that I can recall.

EMC: Did you have the standard hours, eight hours a day?

MJP: Yes.

EMC: How were you treated by your superiors?

MJP: Oh, very well.

EMC: There was no ill treatment or discrimination?

MJP: No. Some of the male Marines that we were replacing were shipped out, so they weren't too happy, but they knew what to expect.

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

MJP: Offhand, I can't think of anything.

EMC: We talked about your housing. And you said you were originally housed in government housing, in the barracks and then went out on your own. Where did you live when you went out on your own?

MJP: We got an apartment in Falls Church, Virginia, which is just a few miles down the road from the annex.

EMC: Did you have a car at that time frame?

MJP: No, we didn't. We used to use the bus and public transportation.

EMC: Did you like that situation better than the barracks?

MJP: Yes, I did. We could more or less come and go as we pleased. We didn't have to check in and out.

EMC: How long were you in Henderson Hall? Do you remember?

MJP: I don't remember when I got my Sergeant's stripes.

EMC: You were promoted very rapidly then.

MJP: Yes. That's because the men were being shipped out. So they

had the open slots, I guess. I must have been there at least six months.

EMC: You mentioned that. You showed me pictures of Henderson Hall. And you showed me your mascot.

MJP: Oh, yes. Everybody loved him. He was the General. He was an English Bulldog.

EMC: And did they allow you to have him in the dorm?

MJP: No. He used to go in and out. He wasn't allowed to stay there. But we used to be able to take him in and out whenever we wanted to.

EMC: Was he a stray or something?

MJP: I don't know. I really don't know where they got him. But we all loved him.

EMC: When you were in Henderson Hall did you have a roommate?

MJP: We all had bunks.

EMC: Was it an open room?

MJP: Yes. I forget how many bunks were in there. You know, certain wings--just like in an Army barracks, I guess.

EMC: Yes. Just like an Army barracks. So it was just bunk after bunk.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: So there was no privacy.

MJP: Not really. No.

EMC: Were there lights out at a certain time?

MJP: Oh, yes. Whistle blowing in the morning to wake us up.

EMC: Did you have to march in the morning?

MJP: We marched. I remember marching around the parking lots at the annex. So we must have had marching during the day over at the Headquarters, usually after working hours.

EMC: Yes.

MJP: We had regular DI's from Parris Island that were shipped in to drill us.

EMC: How were they?

MJP: They were pretty good. They were strict, but they were good. And you couldn't understand them, of course. They had that "rolling," you know. You don't know what they're saying. But somehow you do it.

EMC: Yes. So you escaped all that when you went to live in Falls Church.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: You didn't have any DI's to deal with.

MJP: No.

EMC: Do you remember anything about your pay?

MJP: Ninety one dollars a day, once a month. That was when we moved into the apartment.

EMC: Ninety one dollars a month you mean.

MJP: Well, that's what they used to say. Ninety one dollars a day, once a month.

EMC: Oh, I see. Oh, that's clever. Yes. Did you find that you could survive on that?

MJP: Oh, yes. The three of us did well.

EMC: Had to do your own cooking, of course, and whatever.

MJP: Oh, yes. Or eat out.

EMC: Did you do a lot of that?

MJP: Well, at lunchtime--we had our own cafeteria, but we used to take the shuttle bus to the Pentagon and eat lunch there in their cafeteria, which was a change and something to say I'd been to the Pentagon, you know.

EMC: Right. What did you do in your spare time? Where did you go and how did you socialize?

MJP: We used to go to Washington quite a bit and go to the Smithsonian and Lincoln Memorial--all the buildings. And then we used to go to Rock Creek Park and to the Washington Zoo. That's about it, I guess. We always found something to do. We always took a shuttle bus. And we were singing the whole time we were on the bus.

EMC: Oh, really? What did you sing?

MJP: Oh, all kinds of songs. "Your Mother Wears Army Boots" and all that kind of stuff.

EMC: All kinds of Army songs?

MJP: Right.

EMC: Oh, isn't that something. Did you go with other Marines?

MJP: Yes. Usually a bunch of us girls would go.

EMC: Yes. Did you have a chance to ever go to the White House? Or was that off limits?

MJP: No. They didn't have the tours then during the war.

EMC: Yes. It probably was off limits. Did you have a chance to date anybody?

MJP: Oh, yes. Other Marines usually.

EMC: And how did you meet them?

MJP: Well, I met my husband at the Headquarters. He was working there on limited duty.

EMC: Oh, I see. And he was-- You told us he was in battle on Guadalcanal.

MJP: Yes. He was in the First Marine Raiders.

EMC: In '42 that was.

MJP: September of '42. He lost his left arm.

EMC: Yes. Oh. So he was relieved from active duty.

MJP: Right. They put him on limited duty.

EMC: Where was he from?

MJP: He was from Connecticut.

EMC: Oh, really?

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Interesting. From the east. And so you met there. Was he working in the same department as you?

MJP: No. He was working in the messenger service. They used to take messages to all the big buildings--the Navy Department, the White House, the Pentagon. He used to carry a briefcase with it manacled to his wrist.

EMC: Yes. So where did you go out with him?

MJP: We went to Rock Creek Park a lot. And there was an amusement park--I think it was called Echo Park. We used to go quite often.

EMC: Well, that's great. During the war, did you keep up with news about it?

MJP: Oh, yes. Yes. Because I was interested with my brother. He was in Europe.

EMC: Was he in the Army?

MJP: Yes. In fact, he was in Patton's tank corps.

EMC: Oh, for heaven sakes. And how did he fare?

MJP: Pretty good. He was wounded once, but it wasn't really serious. So he did fine.

EMC: He survived. Were your sisters at all in the service?

MJP: No. They weren't.

EMC: You were the only gal who joined.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Do you remember whether you wrote to your parents or your friends regarding your Marine Corps service?

MJP: Oh, I'm sure. I know I wrote to my parents. I don't recall writing to anyone else offhand.

EMC: Okay. It's too bad we don't have these letters.

MJP: I know. Yes.

EMC: They'd be great descriptions of your daily existence. Did you have any contact with civilians on the outside in D.C.?

MJP: Yes. Especially one girl. She was a civilian working in Headquarters. And she was married, but she used to take some of us home with her on the weekends. And we used to go bike riding a lot with her.

EMC: Oh, that's nice.

MJP: Throughout the city. Yes.

EMC: Now did you engage in any extracurricular activities when you were in the Washington area?

MJP: A friend and I sang in the choir at Fort Meyers, which is an Army post. We used to walk through Arlington Cemetery to get there. In fact, we marched in review there one Sunday for Mrs. Roosevelt.

EMC: Oh, how exciting.

MJP: She reviewed us. Yes.

EMC: How exciting. The Marines marched--

MJP: Well, it was the Army but there was a platoon of Marines, too.

EMC: And you were asked to join. Did you see her then?

MJP: Oh, yes. We went right by her. I was in a position to avert my eyes to look that way.

EMC: Oh, that was great.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Well, that must have been a thrill.

MJP: Yes, it was.

EMC: So why did you decide to sing in the choir at the Army post?

MJP: Well, they had a notice on our bulletin board that they were looking for singers. And I've been in a choir all my life.

EMC: Oh, really.

MJP: And the girl I was friends with loved to sing. So we went over and they let us join.

EMC: Oh, that's good. So you had to sing every Sunday?

MJP: Yes. We practiced once during the week, and then we went to church on Sunday.

EMC: Oh, that's great. Was that the only other extracurricular

activity you got involved in?

MJP: It's the only one I can think of. We did go bowling several times.

EMC: Yes--that was available. Right. Well, you spent, as you said, until August '44 in the Marine Corps. And why were you discharged?

MJP: I was pregnant at the time.

EMC: Oh, I see. So you had gotten married then.

MJP: Got married in March.

EMC: Oh. You got married in March of '44. I see. And tell us about that. Where were you married?

MJP: We were married in the rec hall on base by a Navy chaplain.

EMC: And you were married in uniform?

MJP: Yes. Definitely. Yes. We weren't allowed to wear civvies. And we could wear them around the barracks but not in public.

EMC: But no wedding gown.

MJP: No.

EMC: So you were both married in your uniforms.

MJP: Uniforms. Right.

EMC: And then where did you live?

MJP: They had government housing in Arlington, and we got an apartment there.

EMC: Oh. That's good.

MJP: Yes. It wasn't too far from the Headquarters.

EMC: Very good. And at that point in time, what was your rate?

MJP: I was a Staff Sergeant.

EMC: And your husband?

MJP: Was a Sergeant.

EMC: Oh, yes. So you outranked him.

MJP: Yes. Not that it mattered.

EMC: But you went up rapidly from a Private to a Staff Sergeant in about seven or eight months, I believe, which was very good. Did you both continue working then?

MJP: Yes.

EMC: You until August.

MJP: Until August. And then he took his discharge in October.

EMC: Of '44.

MJP: Forty four.

EMC: And you took yours in August.

MJP: Right.

EMC: Were you at all prepared or did the Marines prepare you for civilian life? Did they give you any indoctrination?

MJP: No, not really, you know. You played it by ear.

EMC: Did you keep in contact with any of the women that you

worked with and got to know in Washington?

MJP: Yes. There were a couple that we stayed in contact with. And he had a couple buddies that we used to double date with.

EMC: Did these people stand up for you in your wedding?

MJP: One of my friends stood up for me, and he had a buddy stand up for him.

EMC: Oh, good. How did you feel about leaving the Marine Corps?

MJP: Well, in one way I was happy about it because I was pregnant. But in another I kind of hated it too, you know, because it had been a good life.

EMC: Yes. Did you receive any medals at all when you left?

MJP: No, I didn't.

EMC: No medals. Did you feel that the women Marines had a strong sense of esprit de corps?

MJP: Oh, yes. Definitely.

EMC: They were all happy and proud to be Marines.

MJP: Seemed to be. Yes.

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

MJP: Well, it was a little rough in the beginning because nobody really knew, you know, being so new. But on the whole I would say yes.

EMC: Did the Marine Corps experience change or redirect your life in any way?

MJP: Not that I can think of at the moment.

EMC: Except for your marriage.

MJP: Right. Yes. Well, that was a definite benefit.

EMC: Yes. That's a benefit, a redirection. Do you think that service in the Marine Corps and being away from home made you more independent and self-reliant?

MJP: Oh, yes. Definitely.

EMC: You felt that it broadened your horizons?

MJP: Definitely.

EMC: And how did you think it broadened your horizons? In what way?

MJP: Well, when I was home I was pretty well at home--going to work, coming home, doing whatever the family decided to do. And this way I was more or less independent and found other things that I liked to do.

EMC: Good. Did you enjoy meeting women from all over the country?

MJP: Oh, yes. Definitely.

EMC: Yes. I think that's a great experience.

MJP: So different, you know, some of them from wherever they're from. It's unbelievable how different you can be just from being in a different part of the country.

EMC: That's right. Did you know anybody who was discharged for any reason from the Marines? Did you have any discipline problems that you heard about there?

MJP: No. Not that I can think of.

EMC: Did you have any career ambitions after you got out of the service?

MJP: No. Just raising children.

EMC: And how many children did you have?

MJP: I have five. And 12 grandchildren. Nine great-grandchildren.

EMC: Oh, my heavens. You've got a big family then.

MJP: That's for sure.

EMC: Are they all in Rhode Island or scattered?

MJP: No. They're scattered. I have two daughters in Rhode Island, one in Connecticut, one in Florida. And my son is in North Carolina. He's retired from the Air Force.

EMC: Oh, really? So you did have children who went into the military.

MJP: Yes. Just one son. Yes. And some of my grandsons are in the

Guard.

EMC: Oh, that's good.

MJP: The National Guard.

EMC: Yes. That's great. So after you left the service and your husband left the service, what did you do and where did you go?

MJP: Well, we stayed in Virginia for awhile because the Disabled American Veterans sent him to American University to become a National Service Officer for the Disabled Veterans. And that lasted almost a year--the training. And then they sent him to Pennsylvania to train. And then in '47 they sent him to Providence, Rhode Island, to open the office here. And that's where we've been ever since.

EMC: Right. A good long time. Fifty-two years in Rhode Island.

MJP: Yes.

EMC: Very interesting. Did you attend any Marine Corps reunions after the war? Or do you know of any?

MJP: No. Except for the WMA--the Women Marines Association. I haven't gone to any reunions because I've been too far out of

state.

EMC: Yes. But you are a member of the Women Marine Corps Association.

MJP: Right.

EMC: And they have a Rhode Island chapter.

MJP: Rhode Island Number One.

EMC: Yes. Rhode Island Number One. Oh, that's great. Do they have meetings often?

MJP: During the year we have one a month. But in the summer they disband.

EMC: Oh, yes.

MJP: Then in September they have a picnic at one of the ladies houses to get us going again.

EMC: Oh. That's good. That's great. What would you say was the significance of your Marine Corps career for you in your life?

MJP: It allowed me to do something for my country along with

having the honor of being in the first class of Women Marines. It provided the opportunity for me to leave home and grow as a person by having an entirely different experience.

EMC: Did you work at all after you were married and you had your children? Did you have full time employment at any time?

MJP: Not until my youngest was about 15 years old. Then I went to work at Kent County Hospital in the Purchasing Department. And then I quit working for awhile. Then after my husband passed away, I went to work at Brown University in the Engineering Department.

EMC: Oh.

MJP: Secretary.

EMC: Yes. That sounds kind of interesting.

MJP: It was very interesting. Yes.

EMC: And did you retire from there?

MJP: Well, I developed lymphoma, so I had to quit work.

EMC: Oh, dear. And I hope that's all cured.

MJP: Supposedly. It was 16 years ago, so I hope so.

EMC: Oh, yes.

MJP: Been free for that long.

EMC: Right. Oh, that's good. Did you ever talk about your Marine Corps days to your children?

MJP: Oh, yes. They used to ask all kinds of questions.

EMC: Oh, that's great.

MJP: Used to laugh at some of the pictures they'd see.

EMC: Oh. They're nice. There are some good ones. But none of your children joined the Marines.

MJP: No.

EMC: You said you had one in the Air Force, which is great. Well, do you have any other comments or any other additions? Any other experiences that happened to you while you were in training, or on your job, or anything else unusual or interesting or exciting?

MJP: I remember one thing that scared us to death. We had a pass from when we were at Headquarters on a Sunday. And we decided we'd go south in Virginia by bus to see the Luray Caverns.

EMC: Oh, yes.

MJP: And we went there. And on our way back we were looking at our passes, and it said you could only go within so many miles. And we realized we had been ten miles farther. So we were scared to death we were going to get punished. But they didn't do anything.

EMC: They didn't find out.

MJP: No. I guess not.

EMC: Did you come home at all during this time frame?

MJP: Oh, yes. In fact, my first leave I went home. Came home quite often. Then after I got married, my husband and I drove to Columbus.

EMC: Oh, yes. Were your parents at your wedding?

MJP: No.

EMC: No. They couldn't come.

MJP: No.

EMC: Well, anyway, that sounds like a short but an interesting career and eventful for you.

MJP: Oh, yes.

EMC: Because you did meet your husband there. Just one last question. Do you think that your joining the Marine Corps was influenced at all by patriotism?

MJP: It might have been. I've always been a lover of the flag.

EMC: Yes. And a desire to serve your country.

MJP: Right. Yes.

EMC: During this time frame. Because that was important.

MJP: And especially at that time. Everybody wanted to do something.

EMC: Yes.

MJP: So that was the only thing I could think of to do.

EMC: Yes. Everybody wanted to contribute--either join the military--do something on the civilian front.

MJP: Right. Yes.

EMC: So very good. Well, thank you very much, Mary Jeanne.

MJP: Oh, you're very welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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