

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

REMINISCENCES

OF

NAVY LIFE

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MRS. D. SERGEANT PEPPER
(HESTER LANING PEPPER)

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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Oral History Program

Hester Laning Pepper's Reminiscences of Navy Life

Interviewee: Mrs. D. Sergeant Pepper (Hester Laning Pepper)

Interviewer: Dr. Evelyn M. Cherpak

Subject: The History of the Naval War College

Date: May 3, 1991

C: This is the first oral history interview with Mrs. D. Sergeant Pepper of Gladwyne, Pennsylvania. She is the daughter of Admiral Harris Laning who was president of the Naval War College from 1930 to 1933. Today's date is May 3rd, 1991, and we are interviewing Mrs. Pepper at her home in Gladwyne.

Mrs. Pepper, I wanted to begin the interview with some questions about your father and his life and career. Can you tell me when he was born?

P: He was born in 1877 in Petersburg, Illinois.

C: Where were his parents from?

P: They were both from Petersburg, but their antecedents were from New Jersey and Maryland.

C: Did he have any brothers and sisters?

P: Yes, he had a brother Levin K. Laning and his sister was Maude Laning Palmer who later became the wife of Brigadier General John McCauley Palmer.

C: So there was a military connection later with his sister.

P: Yes, she was a couple of years older than my father.

C: Was his brother older or younger?

P: His brother was younger.

C: He had no navy connection?

P: No.

C: Was it a close family?

P: Oh, yes, I think so.

C: Where did your father go to school? Did he go to elementary and high school in Petersburg?

P: I presume so. I don't remember.

C: But he did attend a military academy?

P: Peekskill Academy and I think he had his eye on the military all his life. I don't know exactly what inspired him, but I think that's what he wanted to do.

C: Where is Peekskill Academy?

P: Well, it's in New York on the Hudson, but it no longer exists. It was a very fine military academy many, many years ago and then it went downhill and now it no longer exists.

C: How long was he at Peekskill?

P: That I would not know. I suppose three or four years or something, but apparently he was one of the outstanding graduates and later on when he became a four star admiral they had a portrait painted of him and his sword was there under the portrait and so forth.

C: So he was one of the outstanding graduates of Peekskill. Did he ever tell you anything about his childhood or growing up years in Illinois? Any early influences on his life?

P: I can't think, of course, anything too specific but he grew up in the Abraham Lincoln era and his grandfather knew Lincoln well, Thomas Harris, and somebody in the family was buried right next to...Who was the one that Lincoln was in love with? I can't think of the name.

C: Ann Rutledge?

P: Just a coincidence, but they all apparently knew each other.

C: Very interesting. What did his grandfather do?

P: His grandfather? I don't remember. Oh, you mean Thomas Harris? He was a congressman from the state of Illinois and he was quite a hero in the Mexican War and came home. He came so near capturing Santa Anna that he pulled off his wooden leg and brought that home, and his sword had a big handle and my cousin Mary Palmer Rockwell had a jeweled pin made from the jewels from Santa Anna's sword.

C: For heaven's sake, that's really remarkable. What was your father's religious affiliation?

P: The Episcopal Church.

C: Was he very involved in the church?

P: Well, no, but sometimes he would be asked to speak and so forth, and I think that my ancestors in Maryland founded the church there, the Episcopal Church.

C: So he was a practicing Episcopalian.

P: I think his mother may have wanted him to be a minister.

C: But he chose the military instead. He attended the Naval Academy in Annapolis for four years, and he cruised early as a naval cadet. Can you tell me what ship he cruised on?

P: Well, he was on the old *CONSTELLATION*. It was the last time, I think, that it really went to sea. And it was during that cruise he was very concerned about his marks in French at the Naval Academy and he was afraid that he was going to flunk out and he wanted so much to be in the Navy. It

was his love. So his fellow navy friends said, "You are too good a midshipman for us to lose, so we are going to see you pass your French exam." So they coached him all summer long and when he got back, he passed the exam. He was lucky.

C: Was there any naval background at all in his family? Relatives or...

P: There was Harry Harrison who was in the Navy. I think he may have been an uncle, a great uncle or something, but I don't remember exactly. I'm not even sure he was a member of the family.

C: Did he ever comment on the academy years to you, his four years there, and what he particularly liked about the Naval Academy?

P: Well, I think that he just loved Annapolis and the whole thought of being involved in the Navy. I think he always just wanted to be a naval officer.

C: That was his prime goal in life. Was he at all athletic?

P: I don't remember that he was involved in football or baseball, certainly not golf or tennis, but he was, of course, later athletic director at the Naval Academy.

C: So he got involved with this and that at that time. Did he ever mention anything about social life and what the cadets did for fun in Annapolis?

P: I don't remember anything specifically about that time in his life as a midshipman.

C: When did he graduate from there?

P: 1895. There were only 35 in his class.

C: A very small class.

P: I know it and they were hand picked. They were a wonderful group.

C: Was there anybody else that was outstanding from his class? Anyone that made flag rank?

P: Oh, yes, Admiral Gumby. I'm sure there were, but at the moment I can't remember the names.

C: But they were a close group, I'm sure.

P: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. A classmate was a very special thing for life, and I think there were only 35 of them. Everyone knew everybody else.

C: The Navy was so much smaller then.

P: That's it, that was the whole thing. Now there are 2000-2500 at the Naval Academy.

C: Time has progressed, and things have changed. Do you remember what ship he took his first cruise on, and where he went on that?

P: It was the *PHILADELPHIA*, which was really rather a coincidence because Philadelphia has been so much a part of our lives. But yes, he was

cruising on the West Coast and it so happened that the *PHILADELPHIA* went into the port of Santa Barbara and my mother was from Santa Barbara, and she was having her coming out party at the old Arlington Hotel and, of course, it was quite an event when a naval ship came into port. So the young officers were invited to her party, and that's the way my mother and father met. The next day they had entertainment on board the ship, they had a tea party and my father asked my mother to that and, of course, her mother went with her. But later, practically the next day, the ship took off and that was it until several months later my mother was in San Francisco going to art school, and there she was walking down the street one day and coming up one of those streets was my father. And they met and they were very glad to see each other and he asked her to go on a trolley car ride in Golden Gate Park. Well, that started the romance. And he only had about two or three weeks before his ship was to go to the Far East. Poor daddy, on a lieutenant's pay, had to buy three dinners, three tickets to the theater because, of course, you always had to be chaperoned. And finally, the last date they had together they went to dinner and they went to see "Pinafore" and when they got back to where my mother was visiting with an old friend of my grandmother's, her hostess said, well, she really thought that she should retire and, of course, leaving the young couple downstairs, and Mother said that my father got down on one knee and began singing, "I love thee, I adore thee, will you marry me?" So, she gave the proper answer and, but he had to sail away to the Far East to be gone for two years and it was very, very difficult. But the two of them wrote every single day and my grandparents were horrified because they thought, Oh, a naval officer with a sweetheart in every port, and they didn't know the young man. Mother said, "Oh, don't you remember the young man with long curly hair and blue eyes?" And Grandmother said, "Yes, I do." He had such a sweet face, but that's all they knew. So at one point the letters stopped coming, and my aunt who embroidered beautifully, was making these

beautiful flannel petticoats for my mother because she knew she'd be going east, and they were exquisite with their embroidered lacey flowers and other things. Well, my aunt thought the romance was over, the letters stopped coming; so she put the flannel petticoats away which, incidentally, my mother never wore. Oh, I think, two or three months went by and no word from my father-to-be. And one day Grandfather drove in on a carriage and the whole back was filled with these letters, piled up, tied with red post office tape, and it seems that there was a plague in the Philippines where he was stationed, where he was writing some of his letters from, and he didn't realize that the letters were being quarantined in the post office there. So, of course, I guess Mother sent him a cable or something to say that she had finally gotten his letters so, of course, the engagement was on. They really, I think, became acquainted through their daily letters and he wrote wonderfully detailed letters. Every day he would find something to say even if he was at sea and so forth. He always could make his letters interesting.

C: Did your mother save those letters?

P: Some of them, I think. I think there are some of them.

C: We don't have any of them in the archives. They would be kind of interesting.

P: I don't know. It would be a pleasure for me to send you them. But they would. She saved some later letters, but I don't know. Maybe some day another carton will show up, but with all their moving...When I moved here it was my 18th move since I got married, not navy moves.

C: And moving in the Navy sometimes you dispose of things. Those would be wonderful.

P: I wish we had them. Well, they decided to get married the day after he got back to the States, and his parents came out for the wedding and so forth. But just think, not having seen each other for two years.

C: People change.

P: Yes, and I said, "Mother that was taking such a chance." And she said, "Well, darling you know what a wonderful daddy you had. There was no question in my mind."

C: So they were very sure.

P: Very sure, very devoted. It was a very happy marriage.

C: Oh, that's good. That's wonderful.

P: Oh, yes.

C: But I can see the anxiety that her parents may have felt not knowing this individual and the reputation of sailors.

P: Oh, they were.

C: It certainly worked out well. So he was, apparently, in the Spanish American War during this time period when he was writing to your mother. He was in the Philippines, I believe.

P: Yes, he was.

C: On a gunboat during that time period. But he also was in Hong Kong.

P: Yes, that was the time of the Boxer Rebellion.

C: What was he doing there? What was he tasked to do?

P: Well, I suppose, protecting our interests there. I don't remember but he brought home all sorts of souvenirs for my mother-to-be, for his wife-to-be, and old china and pieces of glass and a huge samovar with a dragon on the top and heavy, heavy, heavy and that was carted around for a number of years. Finally, Mother disposed of it. But I wish I had it back. It was enormous. It really was very handsome looking, a Chinese lion and all of that, I forget what they called it.

C: But they were married, as you said, shortly after he came back. Do you know the year they were married?

P: 1900.

C: And that was in Santa Barbara?

P: Yes.

C: Where did they go immediately after that?

P: They came east. I think they may have stopped to visit in Petersburg and then they went right to the Naval Academy and lived at the Maryland Hotel. And my mother said they had such fun there with their young friends

and were very happy in those days. Of course, all the plumbing pipes were all up the walls and they would go right through the building, you see, and so if you wanted a friend to come for a drink before dinner, why you just tap in code on the pipes, and then they had their chafing dish parties and Mother made Welsh rabbit and so forth. Oh, I know there was one episode -- the weather, of course, snow, was something my mother hadn't seen and so they were in the academy grounds and somehow there is some story about the superintendent walking by and a snowball hitting him. I don't know whether it was a snowball or what. Anyway, there was something terribly embarrassing. I don't think she did it, but she was with somebody who threw it.

C: The academy was smaller then, too.

P: Of course, yes.

C: And they knew everybody in the academy and all of the instructors.

P: Oh, yes, they were just starting out, and then they moved into the Flats. They were given an apartment there, and that's where I was born.

C: What year was that?

P: Well, I was born in 1907. I was born seven years later after they were married.

C: Did your mother have any connections at all with the Navy prior to her marriage?

P: No.

C: Did she adjust easily to navy life?

P: Oh, I think she enjoyed it very much.

C: So it was an easy transition for her. Did you and your mother move to the East Coast with your father?

P: My father wanted us at every port if possible. So having one "only" child we were able to move around, whereas families that had more children it would not have been that easy.

C: You were born at the academy then?

P: Yes, in the apartment building, the Flats, where the Officers' Club is now.

C: So he was there again.

P: Well, not again.

C: Well, yes, he came right immediately in 1900, too, as an instructor at the academy.

P: My guess is that it was his second tour of duty, would have been 1907.

C: Exactly, he was there from 1905 to 1907 and he got involved during that second tour with the Rifle Team. He was beginning to organize that. There was something unique about your connection with the Rifle Team, too.

P: Well, I guess. I have a little silver mug over there I haven't shown you, and it says: "To Maria Teresa" because the young officers couldn't remember my name, which was Hester Marie. I still have the mug over here. I must remember to show it to you. I was sort of a mascot, I think, at that time.

C: Yes, I'm really amazed, mascot of the Rifle Team. Did your father have any experience using weapons and rifles or guns or whatever?

P: I don't know, I suppose he learned at Peekskill and he was a very good shot.

C: They competed in national matches.

P: Oh, yes. He won some medals, expert rifleman and what have you.

C: Right. They did very, very well. He then went around the world on the battleship *NEBRASKA*.

P: Yes, and he was the youngest navigator in that cruise. It was the Great White Fleet.

C: The Great White Fleet, yes exactly. Do you remember where they went? Did he ever mention where they stopped on this cruise?

P: Well, of course, I suppose I was brought up hearing about the various things, but I do remember him talking about various ports. My goodness, I think they went all around the world.

C: Exactly, yes they did. He was involved with the Melbourne Rifle Team, too, in Australia. He returned again to the academy after this cruise and at this point in time he was chairman of the Athletic Department. That has his third tour and he was involved in several large projects there, and one was with a Colonel Robert Thomsen. Can you tell us anything about that?

P: What I remember about Colonel Thomsen was when we were living in Washington, 2121 R Street, and that was during the First World War and I just remember this very distinguished gentleman with a white goatee and he apparently was very well supplied with worldly goods. He was very interested in building a stadium and donating part of the funds to build the stadium. And also at that time, I can't remember why, my father was to go to London, but quite a group of people were going to London and Colonel Thomsen had this big yacht, so he was taking a group for whatever this event was in London, and he invited Mother and me to go on abroad on his yacht. And I remember we were down at Old Point Comfort in the Chamberlain Hotel and in the middle of the night came this knock on the door, there was a telegram from my father saying, "Proceed to New Mexico," or where have you, because Huerta would not salute the flag and, of course, that ruined our trip to London. Mother said afterwards she cried all night, but my father just rolled over and said, "Well, that's the Navy," and went back to sleep. But, it would have been a wonderful occasion. I don't know whether all kinds of glamorous things were going to happen on that trip.

C: Oh, that's too bad. The Navy impinged on that. But during this period he was also involved in training the Navy Rifle Team.

P: Well, that was earlier.

C: This was 1910 through roughly 1913. Earlier, yes, exactly.

P: Because the team would have been a little bit later.

C: Where was the rifle team scheduled to go?

P: The second Olympic Games in Stockholm.

C: How did the team fare?

P: My word, they came home with a gold medal.

C: Great for him, since he had done most of the training at the academy then.

P: And the team of Sweden placed a laurel wreath on his head. And Admiral Jules James, it was his final shot that won them the medals and he came home with the medal, the gold medal, and that was, of course, terribly exciting.

C: Oh, I am sure it was. Did he get much publicity about that?

P: Well, I presume there was. Probably in some of those old clippings.

C: That was quite something for him and quite an honor for the Navy because many of these young men were not that well versed in shooting.

P: Yes, I know my grandchildren when I tell them about the Olympics, they are quite impressed because it's now such a tremendous event.

C: It is more of a tremendous event now than it was before. After that, and getting into the beginnings of World War I, your father was interested, of course, in doing his part in World War I. Where exactly did he end up? What kind of job did he get?

P: A desk job at the Navy Department. He wanted to go to sea. He kept applying because, of course, he felt that being a naval officer he should be at sea. But they wouldn't let him go and he was there as Assistant Chief of Navigation and then acting Chief of Navigation and also in the Bureau of Personnel.

C: He was involved in that, too. He won a medal during that time period, an important medal.

P: The Navy Cross.

C: What was that for?

P: I guess his work was that good in personnel.

C: Exactly, so that's a very, very high honor. But he never got to sea then?

P: No, it was, of course, Mother and I were holding our breath and hoping that he wouldn't go, but he felt that he should be at sea.

C: Were you in Washington at this time?

P: Yes, we had this house on 2121 R Street. And it was at that time, too, that they planned the first transatlantic flight, wasn't it?

C: Well, that was just a little bit later in the early 1920s, 1921. But were you attending school at the time?

P: Yes, I went to the Holton Arms School, which was about two blocks away and, of course, that was during the terrible flu epidemic when people were dying like flies. And my father came down with the flu, Mother came down with the flu, and I remember wanting to play with some little friends and I came home and my mother put the thermometer down on the edge of the bed and said, "Now, put this in your mouth." She didn't want to contaminate me. But I said, "Mother, I don't feel well," and I was suppose to go to Miss Hawkes' dancing class and I didn't want to miss it, but, of course, I guess, I came home looking sick, and I was.

C: So you got it, too?

P: All three of us, the cook and the maid, and the whole family and there wasn't anybody to take care of us. You couldn't get a nurse, but finally the Navy Department sent the head nurse from the naval dispensary and that poor woman took care of it. Well, the maid and cook went to their homes, but she took care of the three of us and we survived.

C: How long were you ill for? Do you remember? Was it a week?

P: Oh, yes, a week. Quite severe, people were dying like flies.

C: They didn't have the medicines then.

P: Oh, no, they didn't have the antibiotics. Even now, of course, the flu bugs that people get, they are becoming resistant to the antibiotics.

C: Do you have any memories of wartime Washington, 1914-18?

P: Well, I remember the false peace, it was declared twice that we were at peace and the great excitement, people in the streets celebrating, and then it was announced, I think almost six hours later, that it was a mistake, that the peace treaty had not been signed, but I've forgotten what the interval was between the two, but people celebrated twice the end of the war.

C: Before that really happened, did you ever have an opportunity or did your father ever have the opportunity to meet President Wilson?

P: I suppose he did, yes. Oh, yes, he must have. I remember him talking about it and shaking their heads over Mrs. Wilson not letting anybody see her husband and so forth, between that and Josephus Daniels, why it was a very difficult time.

C: What was the controversy concerning Daniels and Admiral Sims?

P: Admiral Sims decided that some action should really be taken because Josephus Daniels never would sign a paper. These poor, frustrated naval officers would go into his office hoping to have some paper signed, they wanted to have it secured, and he just would say that he would see about it and put the paper to one side and nothing would happen. And they tried to make up all kinds of ways of slipping papers in so that he would sign things. He simply wasn't running the Navy, and here we were at war and all these needs for supplies and these ships and men and everything else and he'd just say he would think about it or something and it was just frustrating. So, finally Admiral Sims decided that it should be taken to court, and my father who was working right there and was very fond of

Admiral Sims because he knew him very well, and he agreed to testify because he was fed up, as one would say, and so was everybody else in the Navy. And my father came out and told them the truth as he saw it, and it was his testimony that turned the tide for Admiral Sims, but, of course, my father was putting his whole career on the line, so to speak. And Mother was just terribly worried that this would mean the end of his naval career, because, of course, it was a political thing too and there were some that sided with Josephus Daniels and thought that was right. But at the same time it all finally worked out.

C: Yes, it didn't hurt your father's career.

P: No, it did not.

C: Can you tell us anything Admiral William Sims? He was such a stalwart figure and later the president of the War College too, and you said he knew their family fairly well.

P: Well, yes, because when he was president my father was on the staff and we had a house there at the War College and I went to school with Margaret and Adelaide Sims at Miss Wilks' School. And Admiral Sims taught me how to play tennis. I never became very proficient, but he tried. And I remember he took us over to a fire station once so we could slide down the brass pole, and I slid down without clinging to the pole tightly enough and landed - well, I couldn't walk for about a week. Of course, there is a spring underneath, but at the same time I went down too fast. I'll never forget that.

C: He was such a distinguished looking man.

P: He was, and he had a loving wife, Mrs. Sims. She and my mother were very good friends. And there were two boys, Billy and Ethan Allan, and they really were dear old friends. Years and years and years later, Mrs. Sims came to Philadelphia to our house for tea with Mother, but that was, of course, years later.

C: Well, your father, the next big event in his career was the planning for the transatlantic flight of the first Navy transatlantic flight. Can you tell us what he did to arrange that?

P: Well, he planned the navigation, really, for that flight and where navy ships would be stationed along the way in order to service the plane, whatever was necessary, and he planned all that. I don't think, they didn't reach, I've forgotten what the objective was, the city, but they got as far as the Azores, but they were very thrilled and happy about that.

C: Did he follow along with the ships?

P: Oh, yes, he did. And, of course, I knew Admiral Towers very well, he was, I guess, the top aviator. As a matter of fact, he almost killed me once. Well, it was, I guess, whether it was before the transatlantic flight or afterwards, but Mother and I lived in Carvel Hall, and we were going over to the *REINA MERCEDES* which was tied up there at the Naval Academy. And Commodore Lloyd and his wife and children lived on board, and we were going for tea. And I had some new white shoes and we were walking just across from the gate at the Naval Academy and along came one of those old watering carts with horses, and it had a tank and it sprayed water on the dusty roads and so forth to keep the dust down. I didn't want to get my shoes spattered, so I pulled away from my mother and darted out in front of the water wagon. And suddenly, this car appeared and just

luckily the new shoes slipped on the trolley car track and down I went with one foot out in front and it was, of course, Admiral Towers driving the car, and he just missed my foot by about inches. And later he said, "Hester, there wasn't anything on that transatlantic flight that scared me more than almost killing little Hester Laning." He said he'd never been so scared in his life. My mother fainted into the hedge in front of Carvel hall and every time I went back after that I'd see this sort of hole in the hedge and tease Mother about it. But anyway, a very dramatic event.

C: Dramatic event.

P: But it was while my father was overseas or at sea for the transatlantic flight, and we were packing up to go to Newport. This would have been 1920. And those Washington houses were built, the row houses, with those little rooms over the front hall and then two rooms deep with side rooms in those days, and I had slept in this little room just off my parents bedroom, but Mother decided that she would get that room cleared for the moving and this certain day she moved me into her room and in the middle of the night there was this horrendous explosion and all the glass and everything was flying all over the place and Mother said, "It's a bomb." I didn't even know half what a bomb was and she thought it was our house because of my father's involvement, and everybody ran out in the streets and they were yelling and screaming, and we weren't sure what had happened. I remember katty corner from us on Florida Avenue was Brooke Russell Astor, now Mrs. Vincent Astor, and her father was in the Marine Corps, and she came running out with various people. My uncle, who is in the Army, came rushing down. They had an apartment just around the corner from us, and they quickly hustled Mother and me back to their apartment, but, of course, all night long we could hear this glass crashing and so forth, and we didn't really know. I think, I don't remember these details, of course,

because I was just a little girl then, but it was an anarchist who was trying to kill Attorney General Mitchell Palmer who lived across the street from us. Mitchell Palmer had put two anarchists in jail and this was in retaliation. The man, apparently, had two bombs in his suitcase. We never knew whom the second one was for, but it was just fate that he decided all those town houses had a little plot of grass in front and he decided to take a short cut across this little plot. His objective was to put the bomb in the vestibule of the Palmer house, and he tripped on a wicket and crashed and blew himself to pieces. Apparently there was a terrible concussion, his falling there on the lawn. These two bombs went off, and a big piece of granite was pulled out of the vestibule. It flew through the second floor window and landed right beside Mitchell Palmer who was reading the paper. He wasn't hurt, but what changed history was that the Franklin Roosevelts who lived three or four doors beyond where we were, on the other side of the street, were coming back from a dinner party and it was so terribly, terribly hot, and they decided instead of going in to the house they would take a little spin through the park, so they told the chauffeur to drive on. They just reached a safe distance when this terrible thing happened and the bomb went off. If they had stopped and walked up to their house, they would have been killed. And that changed, of course, the whole history of the world, that instant.

C: That's amazing.

P: Of course, I remember the next day they sent me to school to get away from what was going on, but I got home in time. All the trees...this man was all spattered all over the place. I saw his head coming down from the Franklin Roosevelt's house and it was all...It was ghastly.

C: It was ghastly.

P: Of course it was, and when you think now of all the bombings and so forth since that time that this is an indelible thing in my mind. Yes, it is, but it really was a very historical event.

C: Did you know the Roosevelts at all?

P: Oh, yes, because he was the assistant secretary of the Navy, or something along in there, we must have. I'm sure they did know him.

C: I just wondered if you remembered meeting them.

P: No, I don't. I remember seeing them but, of course, little did I know who he was going to be.

C: Now your father stayed in Europe for a little bit after the transatlantic flight.

P: I guess we went ahead to Newport, I don't remember.

C: You spent the summer in Newport then?

P: Probably.

C: And in London, I think, he met Lady Astor then.

P: Oh, that story. She came down to see some officer that she knew and there was to be some sort of a parade and, of course, she loved the lime light, and my father said that she stopped her car and the car became part of this parade and she was standing up in the car and bowing to the right

and to the left and so forth, and she had nothing to do with it at all. But she was quite a character, but she was an American, and so she always wanted to be in politics and so forth.

C: So he commented on that very interesting incident.

P: And it might have been when they were having the "trooping of the colors".

C: Yes, that occurred at that time, too.

P: He said that they were invited to that, but somehow a group of naval officers were misguided in the wrong direction and they found that they were near the Royal box and they were terribly embarrassed and they tried to turn away and find where they were supposed to be seated when the king or somebody noticed that these visitors were confused or lost and they were invited to sit in the Royal box, which was a very gracious thing to do.

C: And your father was one of them?

P: Yes.

C: So he at least rubbed shoulders with the king.

P: Oh, yes, he did.

C: Well, that's interesting. Well, you were proceeding to Newport to join him, because your father went to the War College, attended the War College in 1921-1922, and then he stayed on there.

P: Yes, for two years.

C: Can you tell me where you lived during this time period in Newport?

P: Well, we had a house on the Training Station.

C: Oh, you were right on the base then?

P: He was on the staff. We had a house there on the road down...there were several houses in a row below the president's house.

C: Yes, they are still there and they are occupied by people who are on the staff. We were just talking about your father being at the Naval War College in 1921-1922 and on the Tactics Department staff where he was chairman for two years after. Why don't we just review that in haste? I was asking you where you lived during the early twenties, 1921-1924. You were in Newport. Did you live on the base?

P: Part of the time we lived at the Corson's cottage. That's where a lot of navy people lived and it was a fairly nice boarding house, really. There was no place, and there wasn't any hotel there. The Viking hadn't been built, and there had been one hotel but it had burned down, and so we were there until we moved into this house on the base.

C: What school did you attend?

P: I attended Miss Wilks' School, where Admiral Sims' daughters went and a number of navy people.

C: And that was a private school?

P: Oh, yes. And it was located in Miss Wilks' home at 14 Whitfield Place. It was very well suited. She held herself very erect and wore her hair skimmed back in a bun, and she wore glasses and she always wore a mannish shirt and gray flannel skirt, and she lived with Miss Brownell and the two old maids had this house and our classrooms were in rooms there. Oh, Mary Earle went there, and the Belknaps and, of course, the Sims and a lot of navy children.

C: Was it all girls?

P: Oh, yes. Then we had dancing class with St. George's boys and I went to my first dance at St. George's School and met a young fellow. Oh, what fun that was. We would go on these sledding parties and go back to somebody's house for hot chocolate, and then later on we had a little house on Marin Street and, I guess, my father was on the staff, or was it, I guess, it was...

C: During that era?

P: Yes, I don't remember if it was before or after we had the house, but on Marin Street right next door at the Donlin cottage was practically the whole Torpedo class. They were nice young men. And, of course, I was too young, not quite sixteen, but there were so few girls that they would ask me to the movies and sledding and things like that.

C: They were a little older than you were?

P: Oh, yes. They had graduated from the Naval Academy and had taken the Torpedo class. So much to my excitement, Cameron Winslow, whose father was

a retired admiral, had invited me to June Week. I had only pinned my hair up because in those days we wore our hair back with a barrette. And I was invited to my first June Week.

C: At age 15?

P: Well, I had just made 16 by the time I got there because my birthday is the 6th of May. It was terribly exciting because those young officers, they must have been an awfully nice group, and they decided that they would teach me how to tango; they took out phonograph records and we danced. And they briefed me on how I should behave at the Naval Academy. When they played the Star Spangled Banner, some of them said, "Stop talking and stand still." And don't say you want to have tea on the *Cumberland* because, after all, that's where they lived. And don't go on the baseball trips and various coachings that they gave me. And I'd gone to that, and he was a second class man at the time.

C: By train?

P: Oh, no, by the Fall River Steamboat Company. And Mother and daddy went down too, because I guess he was having a reunion or something. But anyway, I had a wonderful time and I met a first class man who invited me to the German. This is 1923. And my second class man thought that this is his first year at the Naval Academy and I ought to accept. And he had made plans for that evening, but he thought that it was so impressive that I had received this invitation to the German, and I had a wonderful time.

C: Was that in Richmond?

P: Oh, no, at the Naval Academy. I will tell you a little story about that. Anyway, that was my first debut at the Naval Academy and I remembered it many years after that.

C: That was a great social time then?

P: Oh, very much so.

C: Well, your father stayed on through 1923 at the Tactics Department at the War College and he was chairman of that. What did he do after the War College? Where did he want to go? Do you remember? He had his heart set on going to another educational institution.

P: Oh, yes, to the Army War College. That was what we wanted at that time.

C: Did he ever end up there?

P: No, he never did. But I am trying to set in chronological order when his ships went to Australia.

C: We are coming right on that. But before he took command of the *PENNSYLVANIA* you went to Oregon with him.

P: Well, we had our vacation with my aunt and cousins that had this beautiful island up at Umpqua River, and my father just always thought that that was the kingdom of heaven. He just loved it. And the fishing, of course, was marvelous and my cousins would take him to these streams... beautiful, beautiful countryside.

C: He enjoyed fishing then?

P: Oh, that was really a hobby, but he had so few opportunities to fish because so often he would be going from one position to another that he couldn't get any leave. It piled up for several years.

C: So he had very little time to pursue other activities.

P: Oh, absolutely. He was so dedicated that...

C: The Navy was his life then?

P: Yes, it was.

C: Full-time job, 24 hours a day. Well, after your vacation he took command of the *USS PENNSYLVANIA*, a battleship. Where was this battleship home ported?

P: I rather think that it was San Pedro. I don't remember, but I was in school in Santa Barbara. It was my senior year. I was at the Santa Barbara Girls' School, Miss Chamberlain's, which no longer exists, but it was supposed to be a very nice school and Barbara Hutton went there the year before, so I just missed that. But anyway, the *PENNSYLVANIA* came in to Santa Barbara, then the *PHILADELPHIA* came in, and then my father's first ship, the *PENNSYLVANIA*. So my father said I could have a tea party on board ship and invite some of my school mates. So I became very popular overnight when the girls got wind of the fact that I was going to have a party on board the ship, and I made out my list of friends that I wanted to invite. Miss Chamberlain said, "Oh, dear no, you should ask so and so and so," her pets, and it was terribly embarrassing because I had said, "You

know, I don't want you to come to my party," and so forth, but anyway, she took it over and made out the list. But we went on board and, of course, the bands were playing, the tea dancing, and one or two romances started at that party and eventually they married. So that was fun.

C: You were in that area? You were living in Santa Barbara at that time?

P: Well, my grandparents were still alive there and Mother was coming and going between Long Beach and my father, and she would come up to see me. I would weep copiously whenever she came. I hated the school. Well, I had never been to boarding school and I had been on dates with midshipmen and ensigns since I was 14 or 15, and these girls were thrilled about the little prep school boys that came from the Thatcher School, and I was bored to tears. I'd traveled around so much and being restricted and being on your honor to not take even a chocolate bar and, of course, you had to be on your honor to brush your teeth. I mean, it was ridiculous.

C: Oh, yes. It was very strict there.

P: Yes, bored, very bored.

C: Were you there for a year?

P: That was my senior year. I was supposed to go to Miss Clancy's, but my father reserved the best place for me.

C: So you followed him, obviously, but his battleship command was very important for him, the command of the *USS PENNSYLVANIA*.

P: Oh, he loved that ship. He was thrilled to be named the skipper of that ship and it was supposed to be the snappiest, happiest ship in the fleet, and they got "E" for excellence painted on the smokestack.

C: Smokestacks, I guess. Well, this was kind of a prelude to flag rank, wasn't it?

P: Oh, yes. Apparently, he was an outstanding captain. The ship had a very fine reputation before he took charge. Captain Heinz's, his daughter lives here, married Charley Hart who was in command, and then my father, and the first time I looked at the roster of commanding officers, just one name after another were old friends which he knew.

C: Well, the ship went on a very extensive cruise. Where did it go?

P: It went to Australia, and I often think that really the government is so stingy. They never allocate enough funds for entertainment, ever. When they went to Australia, there, of course, they would be wined and dined at every port and the only way these officers could possibly return their hospitality would be to invite people on the ship, on board the ship, to take a tour of the ship and so forth, and then give them lemonade and lady fingers, which they had to pay for out of their own pocket. And thousands of people, of course, came on board these ships. It was a goodwill tour with no money to return a dinner or anything. I remember when my father was back at the War College, there was never really enough money for all the entertainment, and I would be interested to know whether the same thing exists today.

C: I think there is more money now.

P: The politicians, of course, tried to take everything they could from the service, eliminating golf courses and all the perquisites and so forth, and this was very important because the pay wasn't high. But as you went up in rank, of course, you required a house with a staff of servants and cars, chauffeurs and gardeners, and it was wonderful. And when you think of the responsibility of an admiral, his responsibility is as great as the president of General Motors. Look at the difference in pay. I remember hearing my father talk about that.

C: Did you have to scrimp at all in your navy years?

P: We had, you know, people they tell you, they have a little outside. But, oh, yes, we certainly did not splurge but in my travels and my father's, actually we stayed at the very best hotels at, of course, navy rates, and so that was wonderful. And, of course, Mother and I always had to be dressed and had to be in as good a shape as possible, and keeping our wardrobes going we could have used more money, there is no doubt about it.

C: Did he see anything in Australia? Did he mention whether he had an opportunity to tour?

P: They weren't in port for very long. I don't remember that, but it was at that time, you see, that I had just graduated from the Santa Barbara Girls' School and it was decided that as long as we were not really able to follow my father, with 3 or 4 days in port, and then 2 or 3 weeks maneuvering at sea, it wasn't practical for us to travel to Australia. So that's when they decided that I could take the grand tour, and that was in 1925. So Mother and I sailed on the Belgian Line and while we were on the ship we heard about the devastating earthquake in Santa Barbara, which we had just left, so Mother was terrible worried about it. Well, her parents

had died by then, but her sister was still in the area. When we arrived in Paris the ambassador invited anybody who was connected with Santa Barbara to the embassy to give us all the latest news, and we got news that she was all right, but the description of the earthquake...Well, you see, my grandfather was an architect, he was an early time architect in Santa Barbara, and he ran out of the house through the dining room and the kitchen. And under the kitchen he had built a cistern for rain water, since they were always having a drought there, and Gram said she could hear the water just sloshing in great waves in this cistern as she ran over the kitchen floor and out the back door. She thought the ocean had come up under the house.

C: Oh, dear. How long were you in Europe?

P: Well, we were there almost a year and we spent six months with a delightful French woman on the Left Bank, and Mother saw to it that I saw every art gallery and cathedral and palace, I think, in Europe. We lived in Paris for six months and then toured the Chateau District, taking trips all the time, and we spent a month in Spain. Mother was very interested in Spain because, of course, the Spanish influence in Santa Barbara.

C: Can you tell us anything about that?

P: Well, I particularly remember seeing the palace in Madrid, and we were somehow getting a private tour. Of course, there weren't the tourists in those days as there are today. And Mother and I were alone with this nice old guide seeing the great magnificent gems in the palace, and we entered into the throne room and it was exactly as your imagination of a throne room would be. All it's beautiful gold leaf mirrors and stands, and there were the two thrones of gold and I was, of course, goggle-eyed and very

impressed and the guide said that, "Why don't you sit there?" Oh, I couldn't imagine. He said, "Why not? Get on." And so I walked over and I sat on the Throne of Spain, which is, of course, I wish I had had a camera but, of course, I didn't. And then we went on and out downstairs by a smaller stairway and we arrived in a narrow hallway leading out to a portecochere where there was a limousine. And ahead of us just a few feet was this gilded elevator, and just as we arrived the bell started ringing and the guide was perfectly horrified and said, "We are not even supposed to be here. The king and queen are coming down in the elevator to go to their car." And I said, "Oh, I've never seen a king or a queen," and the guide said, "Cherie, I will give you an experience to take home," and we flattened ourselves against the walls trying to be as inconspicuous as possible out there. It was Alfonso and his queen, a very handsome couple, and, of course, they could immediately see that we were extremely embarrassed and so forth. They were very gracious and smiled and bowed and walked down and got in their car. And as the car turned to go out, Alfonso looked through the rear view window and blew a kiss. So that was very exciting, and we always had a variety of experiences. Anyway, it was a memory to take home. So we went on and met these delightful people from New Orleans on the Riviera, and then onto Lisbon, and eventually we went back to Paris. But we decided my father was going to be back in the States a month ahead of time, so that was enough for us. There was something about my being presented at Court at that time. It was sort of half arranged. And then we had word that my father was to be in command of the midshipman's cruise two years later, or something like that, and the ships would be going to England. So that would be much more appropriate with my father there, it would seem more official, so we decided to wait. And anyway, Charley Buchanan, whose father was in the Navy, a bachelor, was en route and I thought that sounded much more fun than being presented at

court, so Mother and I really chickened out and came home and, I guess, we met my father maybe in Annapolis, I don't remember. And so that was that.

C: Did you miss his tour? Were you gone during his tour as CO at the Training Station at San Diego? Or did you live with him then?

P: Oh, yes. I went to the San Diego Academy of Fine Arts and at that point I insisted on learning how to drive and my father bought his first car. It was a Buick because he would never drive. We had a chauffeur. And then a few times when the chauffeur would be off-duty, and so my father would pay him to moonlight. But it was very pleasant and, of course, I spent a lot of time in Coronado and I was a member of the Gallant Lawn Club, and it was the league of young women, and we had this shell and we'd boat around the harbor, and later on it became the Junior League of San Diego, but I had gotten past its ranks and when we lived in Oregon there wasn't any Junior League. But then my cousin in Washington was making her debut and, of course, that was the year I was supposed to come out, so I came east and spent a month with her and visited around and had a marvelous time. And I remember it was a custom for the young men in Washington to call on Sunday afternoons and we would have chocolate cake and so forth. And Helen said to me not too long ago, "Hester, do you remember one afternoon eighteen boys called on us and the two of us thought nothing of it?" We just sat there enjoying ourselves. Oh, we had such a good time. But there were so many young men in those days and there are not now.

C: Where have they all gone?

P: Of course, many on them were lost in the Second World War, the Vietnam War, and the Korean War.

C: Customs have changed.

P: Yes, they had to have.

C: That sounds delightful. You were never at a loss for things to do and activities.

P: Oh, no. There were always always parties.

C: Did you do any painting then?

P: I went to art school every Saturday of my life, practically, and I had studied at the Academy of Fine Arts. I took a course in decorative design and I was in life classes and so forth, and my mother was an artist and she did what she could to encourage me and saw to it that I saw all the works of the old masters.

C: So you have an appreciation for classical art?

P: Oh my, yes. Why, I can just walk into a gallery and know that's an El Greco and that's a Rubens and that's a Rembrandt.

C: When you were in San Diego, did you ever have an opportunity to visit Hollywood?

P: We went up once to Hollywood and we were there and met Lon Chaney and he offered me a job in the movies. My family was aghast.

C: Did you ever date any movie actors?

P: Well, that was later on.

C: We'll talk about that later. But you missed your chance to be a movie star.

P: That time.

C: I know your father met Charles Lindberg when he was out there preparing for his flight.

P: I don't remember that. Well, I wasn't there at that time.

C: You did stay in California, too, when he was chief of staff to the Battle Fleet, 1927-28.

P: Yes, that time we were, I guess, at the Villa Riviera in Long Beach or maybe we had a house there.

C: He went to Hawaii during that time period, too, with his ships.

P: Well, we went there in 1927 and we were there for three wonderful months. We stayed at the old Halikalani Hotel in a bungalow there, and it really was just marvelous. And there were several girls and me and, of course, all the young officers and we had quite a group that would meet on Sundays and go for a picnic. And we found this beautiful beach, nobody else was ever there, and it became our beach. We went there Sunday after Sunday, and I'll show you pictures, but I think you saw them. We had pictures taken there, and I remember even going into the water. We had lunch and maybe our supper there too, and in the dark going in the water and I took my bathing suit off and hung onto it because nobody was around,

they were all on the beach, and I swam around loving this beautiful soft water, and then put the bathing suit back properly so I could walk up the beach. Well, it turned out that a few years later when I was talking to someone from the islands, an artist, whether it was one or two individuals, and they said, "Nobody went swimming in there." I said, "Yes." They said, "That was filled with octopi, nobody swam there." And to think, I was swimming around all by myself and so forth in the murky black water and...

C: You never met one?

P: No, thank goodness. But Sunday after Sunday all of us went and I remember we had the girl's dressing room in the car. We put all towels up, you know, in the windows, and the boy's dressing room and then we put umbrellas up because I couldn't stand the sun, I never could. We even had a stove that someone brought. Leaving there and having to throw all the gorgeous leis over, you know, as you left you had to throw them back in the water so you could return, which I never did. And they were all so beautiful. I only wore them two or three hours, of course, and threw them back.

C: Well, you were in Hawaii in the old days.

P: Oh, yes. The Royal Hawaiian Hotel had just been built. Now, of course, nobody stays in Honolulu. They go to Maui or some other places.

C: Well, after that your father went up to Puget Sound with the Fleet?

P: Yes, we went to Seattle. I remember, of course, the usual parades and so forth, and a parade was slated for say 2:30 in the afternoon. I had to go shopping because there was something I had to buy. And it so happened

that the parade was on a square in Seattle and a big department store was right across from where the reviewing stand was going to be. My parents wouldn't approve that I do this, so I told them I just would run this errand and then join them on the reviewing stand. I took it all very casually in those days. And, my word, of course, I stayed in this store a little longer than I should and I came out, and it was an empty square when I went in, now it was solidly, solidly packed with people. And I could see my parents way across. I suppose they were craning their necks for me. But I saw a policeman and I had tried to worm my way, I couldn't possibly do it. And I saw this policeman and I said, "Is there any way? I am supposed to be over there. My father is reviewing this parade." He said, "Hop in." There was his motorcycle with a sidecar, so he put me in the sidecar and he drove all the way around right up in front of the viewing stand and much to the embarrassment of my parents their daughter stepped out, so that's one of my memories of Seattle.

C: Well, after that your father was with the Battleship Division Two of the Scouting Fleet and he traveled around quite a bit with that. I believe you were in Europe for about three months while Battleship Division Two was there.

P: I don't think we were at that time. We went to Europe in '29 when he was in command of the midshipman's cruise.

C: Well, that was probably part of that. I think they docked in Barcelona and in Naples and Rome and Weymouth.

P: But Weymouth, they didn't go. You see, that's why I never was presented. Because the ships, they changed, they changed the itinerary and

crossed out England, and so therefore I was not presented at Court. I should have taken advantage of it the first time.

C: But you did follow the Fleet during that period of time?

P: Well, we did and we had some very interesting experiences, for instance, in Rome. Captain Ralston Holmes was the naval attaché there, and this dinner was to be given at the embassy for my father and the other officers of the cruise, and it so happened that Captain L.A. Yancey and Roger Q. Williams, the famous aviators, landed in Rome that day. Well, we were supposed to go with the Holmes' to the embassy dinner and Sally Holmes and I did not listen to the briefing that was being given to my parents. We were chatting away and all of this and I thought, I'll be the low person on the totem pole and it didn't make any difference. And, well, we arrived at the embassy and here were these very attractive, of course Yancey and Williams were there, but also very attractive young Italian aviators. And at dinner I remember the table was perfectly beautiful. It was a great mahogany table shining and shining and in the middle of the table was a perfectly beautiful piece of sculpture which became quite famous. It was a bird in flight from wing tip to wing tip. It was lovely. And I found that I was sitting next to this young aviator and he was talking about his transatlantic flight and so forth, and he said that he flew from Alaska or something. Obviously, I was drawing a blank. It turned out I was sitting next to the Lindberg of Italy and I should very well have known the flight, his famous transatlantic flight or whatever it was. Well, I guess he was delighted to find someone who he could talk to, tell it to, because he was a hero. Everybody in Italy knew about him and just about everybody in the world, except Hester Laning. Well, anyway, he told me all about the flight during dinner and, of course, I was so embarrassed because I, if I had of listened to the briefing I would have been told whom I was going to meet

there, but anyway, I don't think I did too badly because he asked me to walk in the garden with him afterwards. The mountains and the music, a perfect day. He was very handsome. Years later I was walking down Fifth Avenue and there was this huge funeral at St. Patrick's Cathedral and I knew it was somebody important and I asked a passerby, "Whose funeral is this?" And they said, "Oh, the famous Italian aviator, Mario De Bernardi. He was killed when his plane was set to go back. His plane crashed and he was killed." He was very handsome. Fortunately, he could speak English.

C: Oh, well that was interesting.

P: Oh, yes, it was. And then, of course, it was great fun meeting my friends in Barcelona and an old friend of mine, a neighbor, Cameron Howard, who was a midshipman. He was younger than I, but I had known him forever, so we were in Barcelona so he asked me if I would go up this mountain. Was it Tibidabo or something? Well, it was just a great mass of rocks and the midshipmen would go on a train and then sit there and go to the top. Well, I got on the train and we walked through and I was just totally ill on the train, so that was a little disconcerting, but we went on and went up to the top. We could see the view up there and, of course, there were all these vendors begging us to buy shawls and all the usual tourist junk and we went back to the railroad station a few minutes before the train was to take us, the funicular, was to take us down, and suddenly, all these midshipmen came running at me and said, "Do you think my mother would like this shawl? Do you think my mother would like this comb?" or something. Well, they all had already bought these terrible things, so I said, "Well, of course, I know she will be thrilled." Then finally, I'm ready to go get the train, and I finally said, "Why don't you wait and see what you can find in Madrid?" But that was a terrible responsibility, this sudden conversion of them.

C: Well that was an interesting time, too, in Barcelona and Rome.

P: And Naples. Oh God, that was fun.

C: How was the Fleet at sea?

P: Oh, very well. Oh, there were floats, and parties were everywhere.

C: Well, with your European tour over, where did your father report next?
He was coming to Newport, I believe.

P: Well, that would have been when he was president of the War College.

C: Exactly. 1930 to 1933, he was back there. Where did you live then?

P: Well, in the president's house at the War College. It was a perfectly lovely place to be.

C: What were you involved in at that period of time? Were you attending classes?

P: Oh, I always went to the Art Association Saturday mornings and so forth, and then we had our own little group that got together and we worked together, and I began drawing portraits. They were terrible, but anyway, a friend of mine, well, it was Mrs. Jules James' house, had a beautiful little baby and she wanted me to try to do a portrait. I'd never done babies, but I did. It was, of course...working on children is very difficult because they don't sit still, and we were holding birdcages over her head and everything else to get the baby to look, but I did this pastel

of the baby, darling Eleanor. "You have to do this. You have to go into business." And she insisted on giving me twenty-five dollars for it, and they began telling everybody that they should have their portraits done by Hester Laning. I was so embarrassed. And I am sure some people decided to have it done because they were polishing apples, but we went out to the West Coast after my father left the War College. While, he was on...

C: The *Chicago*?

P: Yes, the *Chicago*. The James' were in Coronado and they said, "Well, you have to come down. We have another baby. You have to come down and do her portrait." And, my word, I did the baby's portrait and Jules said, "Hester, you are spending too much time trying to have a good time; we have got to get down to business with these portraits." So, Jules would go to a cocktail party and drum up trade and he said that, "Instead of sleeping late in the morning, you'll have to get up and have an appointment in the morning at ten o'clock and in the afternoon at two." And I said, "Well, I guess I can. You know, you can't grind out creative work like that." "Oh, yes, you can." Well, my word, I did something like thirty-five portraits. And at the Coronado Hotel which was, at that time, under the management of a retired naval officer, and these two got together and decided that I should have a show, and my parents said that I wasn't ready and my mother was frightened because of my reputation - very amateurish. I could get a little likeness and that's what sold them, but the technique was amateurish and so I said, "No, I really couldn't do it." And I was irate. The James' would not let me go back to Long Beach. I was with them for three months grinding out these portraits, and there was the nicest boy there that did photographic portraits and he gave me a beautiful album. But, I guess, there were a lot of people who had their picture frames made there, and they had a good business. But then I was asked a second time, in fact,

they just decided that I had to have this show and announced it, and my family was very embarrassed, but they came down for it and so forth. I had a wonderful time, but I can remember people looking at these amateurish paintings. I was not ready for a one-man show, let's face it, but then we went to Panama.

C: Can I retreat a little bit back to the War College where you were for three years? Can you tell me anything about your social life there? Did you meet anybody of import? I know General Pershing was there and Marshall Petain.

P: I remember Petain. I don't remember Pershing, but maybe I met him. I don't know.

C: Were you involved at all in the America's Cup races in 1930?

P: Oh, we went out to see them, and I remember Ambassador Girard owned some boats in the races.

C: Yes, I remember your father met Sir Thomas Lipton there and you probably did, I'm sure.

P: But there were always balls and parties, of course, associated with it.

C: Could you comment on the social life?

P: Well, it was great fun because there were such a number of parties. Of course, the ships were there sometimes so when the Navy was in we had dates with the Navy and when the Navy went out, we had dates with civilians, and my best friend Martha Ellis was spending the summer with me and we were

invited to go out on the *AMBERJACK*, which was a little yacht that the president later bought, and she said there were these nice group of Bostonians on this yacht and they said we ought to go out for a sail, so we decided to accept and that's where she met her husband, Jack Leland. He was from Boston. And so that courtship began right on the boat in front of the president's house. So she's been very interested in hearing about Newport. She lived there for two months with us, you know, going around in her Model A Ford car.

C: Did you socialize at all with the 400 in Newport? Did you attend their parties and balls at their mansions?

P: Oh, yes, oh very much so. And we went to Bailey's Beach and had a bathhouse there, and Pearl Mesta's balls, and we went to so many of those balls.

C: Was she in Newport then?

P: Yes, she was, and she was just starting out.

C: Can you tell us anything about her?

P: She was from Texas, a native, and made her millions in oil. And she and her sister each had a house in Newport. Her sister had two daughters. Pearl Mesta didn't have any children. And they just planned their parties so carefully. And at their dinner parties they would seat people that perhaps they had never met before, but would be of interest and, of course, Newporters were very stuffy about this. A person from Texas...but, of course, they all went to her parties and, of course, she became the hostess with the mostest. And then we knew the Cornelius Vanderbilts very well.

Neil Vanderbilt was a beau of mine. For years we went dancing, and living in New York with orchids, you know, and so forth.

C: You mentioned on the last tape when we were just about ending, that you went out with Cornelius Vanderbilt. Can you comment on your association with the Newport Vanderbilts?

P: We really knew them really very well. We were often asked there for dinner, gorgeous dinners, with footmen on every chair. I remember the year that Miss, I forgot her name, was terribly disturbed because she couldn't get footmen all the same height to stand behind the chairs at dinner banquets and balls, but anyway, the Vanderbilts...Apparently, General Vanderbilt would sometimes change the place cards at a dinner, much to his wife's consternation, and he would sit in the middle of the long table and she would sit at the end. And I remember one night I was invited there for dinner, I don't think my parents went to that one, but I started to walk down to get the salt and Neil came after me and said, "You know, you are supposed to be sitting here." My word, I was on the left of General Vanderbilt and you know who was on the other side. Of course, I don't know who was plumped out and where I was supposed to have been sitting, but I just thought I'd go through that chair because all of these old Newporters really looked at me through their lorgnettes to see who this was that was sitting next to the General and to Neil and, of course, people began saying are they engaged and so forth, which we certainly were not. For years I'd go dancing with him, but I never felt inclined to...Well, anyway, he was married five times after that. But it was fun. And Louella Parsons with her tidbits of gossip and, oh, who was that man that was the gossip columnist?

C: Walter Winchell?

P: Walter Winchell, yes, he'd make remarks about us. We were seen here or there, at the casino, in the park or in town, where ever I happened to be he'd look me up, so that was fun. And then, I knew all the young men that were summering in Newport and so forth. And I remember later in New York when I was on a date with Neil and we were sitting at the Ritz Bar and in came Howard Hughes and he sat down next to me and there I was, Vanderbilt on one side and Hughes on the other, and I didn't think much of it. I danced with Howard Hughes in Newport, and my father was at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and Howard Hughes called up and asked me for dinner on such and such a night. Well, it so happened, I had a date with another man, a naval officer, I think he's long gone now, and Howard Hughes said, "Oh, well, I am sorry." I said, "Well, maybe another evening, but I already have another date." "Oh, that's all right," he said. And I have heard since that he never liked being turned down, so anyway, I never heard from him again.

C: Did you attend the tennis matches in Newport?

P: Oh, yes, we had an umbrella and box and what have you. Always went to those and that was great fun and, of course, the balls afterwards we danced with the tennis stars. And I remember many of them were very handsome.

C: Life in Newport was really pleasant at that time period.

P: Oh, yes, it was a wonderful time and, of course, it was much more active socially in the summer than in the winter, but then we carried on during the winter. We had parties and so forth. We lived in Newport and all the service people had their house parties on a different scale, of course.

C: And the president's house is always a busy place for entertaining, people for lunch and dinner and the like.

P: Oh, yes. The difficulty in those days were the afternoon calls that my parents had to make. That was a real problem because it was the fashion then to call on people. If we went to a party at their house, we were supposed to leave our card there forty-eight hours after the party to show that you really enjoyed it, and as president of the War College everybody came to call, the Newporters, the services - Army and Navy, and the summer colonists. They all called, and my parents had to return every one of those calls. And every afternoon the chauffeur would appear at the front door and instead of taking a nap or walk or anything else, they had to climb in the car and go around leaving these calling cards. Well, the custom was that if you were in the car you turned the corner of your calling card up so that when it was taken in to the lady of the mansion she could invite you in for tea if she knew you were outside in the car, and they always hoped they wouldn't be because that just meant they couldn't go calling on all the others. It would slow them down. They made a number of calls in the afternoons and I know I can remember hearing my father say, "Well, I guess we are on easy street, we've only got 350 more to make." It was day after day after day, so ridiculous, and it took a whole war to eliminate that, the Second World War. It was all these foolish fashions and customs and, of course, we were getting on a more democratic path after the Second World War, like I said, it took a war to eliminate this very foolish thing.

C: Burdensome business in making social calls. Do you have anything more to add about life in Newport before we go on?

P: Well, one of the things that he did try to instigate at the Naval War College when we first lived there was to eliminate calls for the service people. And they were invited, a number of them, on the lawn in back of Luce Hall, and my father got the idea that we should stand in line, and people would walk through and meet my parents and the staff and so forth, and then stand beside the last person in the line and form a circle, and in that way everybody was supposed to meet everybody else and not call on anybody. My word, the very next day, the cars began driving up to the house and my parents said, "Oh no, they're coming anyway." And each one wanted my parents to know that they knew what was the proper thing to do, which was to call on the admiral, but it was a big, big headache. It was a burden, it really was.

C: To be available and ready and there.

P: They had a reception once a month, everybody. It was a stag luncheon for the speaker at the War College and then in between were these dinners which were a social obligation. But in those days, of course, there was help, because there was a staff, the Filipinos, and there was the steward who came up every morning and Mother discussed the menus with him and, of course, he did the marketing and ran the entire household, really. And then there was the chef and two Filipino boys that took care of the cleaning and maintenance and so forth, and then two or three gardeners and a chauffeur on duty night and day, two of them. And then, of course, there was staff that could do the entertaining, but nowadays I understand it's very difficult.

C: Well, they have cut back quite a bit.

P: But I was told when I met the lovely Mrs. Strasser, she said they have already entertained three thousand people and she'd only been there three or four months. I just couldn't believe it.

C: They have the students coming through. They invite all the students to their house, I know that.

P: But all the town's people. I guess it's the same old story, only they don't make calls. I guess they have a day at home and that's when everybody descends.

C: Well, that was very interesting, a bit of navy social life in Newport.

P: Oh, it was wonderful. It really was.

C: Your father then was promoted to vice admiral. Do you remember how you celebrated this, or did you celebrate it?

P: Well, I suppose we did. I don't remember that particular promotion, but I do remember when he first became admiral, I mean rear admiral. We were in Newport, but I happened to be visiting in Hartford, Captain and Mrs. Gibbons, where he had retired and had this beautiful estate in Farmington. And I, of course, had known them since he was a captain and superintendent at the Naval Academy. And Mrs. Gibbons would plan a Christmas party and have everyone inside and ask all of these children to sit to support me or something. I was very little and I sat on her lap, and I remember she had this gray satin dress on and it was very slippery satin, so I kept slipping and she kept pulling me back and I could remember that, and I just got up and made a little presentation, and then they always were very dear friends of the family. So I was visiting them in

Farmington and I was told that there was this great boulder that was a cliff and if you could walk through it and make a wish, your wish would come true. Well, I knew my father's candidacy was coming up for promotion to rear admiral, so I squeezed myself through this aperture and that Maude Gibbons came running down the road waving a telegram and it said, "Your father has been made an admiral. Hurrah!" signed Mother. So I remember that. But I think my father may have been at sea and my mother in Newport and me in Hartford, so we weren't together.

C: But he did go on from there to the *CHICAGO*, the battleship *CHICAGO*?

P: Yes, that was when he left the War College. And, of course, on that day there was this horrible explosion on the *CHICAGO*, the turrets, and that just broke my father's heart. And one of the young men in that explosion had been sort of a beau. He was in for twelve years.

C: So there was loss of life.

P: Oh, yes, there were seven or eight losses of men. I don't remember just what the toll was, but it was very tragic.

C: Right after he had taken command?

P: Practically the day.

C: Now, the Fleet...I believe you were following the *CHICAGO*, too, when it was going to transit the Panama Canal. I think you were in Panama at that time.

P: We were. The Fleet was maneuvering off Panama for a period of about three months and we stayed at the old Tivoli Hotel. It was just delightful, and we loved Panama.

C: Oh, you did. What did you love about it?

P: Well, it, of course, was tropical and the hotel was very, very comfortable and a lot of, of course, our navy friends were there and we were very active going to the Officer's Club at night, dinner dancing in the moonlight and all that sort of thing. The shops were fascinating because they had all of these imported things. It was a free port. And, of course, the commissary, my word, you could stock up on china and they had beautiful things, imported things from the Orient and perfumes. And I remember, my friends found out that I like Dans La Nuit by Worth, they began seeing who could give me the biggest bottle. Well, that was marvelous, and the night I was packing up, I had this bottle of perfume, and one of these boys called up for a last talk and I said, "Oh, I'd just broken a bottle of perfume, but it wasn't yours," and he turned to these other boys and each one wanted to know whose it was. And, you know, I unearthed one of those bottles when I moved in here and it sits there on my bureau now, and it is half full and it was so tightly clasped that you could still smell the aroma, which is very unusual for perfume because it usually evaporates. But I'm afraid to even test it again because it might...because it was very obvious, it was one of these wonderful old perfumes.

C: So you really enjoyed your three months there.

P: Oh, yes. I can tell you another funny story, but I don't think we have time. I'll tell you later.

C: But then you did follow the Fleet up to New York for the Naval Review.

P: Yes, that's when we rode up Fifth Avenue in a ticker tape parade and so forth. It was all very, very exciting.

C: You were feted quite a bit then, I am sure.

P: Well, we were. My father was given keys to the city and so forth, and Mayor La Guardia or Jimmy Walker or whoever planned it, but there were all kinds of parties and we met a lot of celebrities and it just so happened we were invited to see the police lineup. They wanted to do something. Well, the night before that was to happen, my friend Neil Vanderbilt said, "Let's go to the Casino de Paris." It just opened, one of those gaudy night clubs, and we thought it would be fun to go. And he had arranged for a table, and we got up to dance and very foolishly I left my pocketbook on the table. I was so trusting. And in it was this lovely souvenir from the Mardi Gras in New Orleans where I had three marvelous weeks visiting friends that we had traveled with in Europe. And I was given as a souvenir by the Mummers Club, a special cigarette box which was silver and had tortoise shell and a monogram. It was a beautiful little thing, and that was in the purse. And when we came back, the purse was there but the cigarette case was gone. So, of course, we asked around and no one knew anything about it. The next day we were to go to see the morning line-up of the police and see how they ran the department, so I decided I'd get myself there...I'd get up and go. It was, I guess, nine o'clock, it was really early for me, but anyway, I made it. And so we were talking with all these different people, the chief of police and so forth, and I said, "Maybe one of you can find my cigarette case?" Well, when I told them where I had been, they were fascinated because it seems it was run by the

Mob and they were dying to get something on the Mob, so they said, "Ask some of your friends, and go back tonight to the Casino de Paris. And we would like you to go and we want to see what they are going to do." Well, I told my friend Neil and I asked a lot of my navy friends and, of course, they were delighted to get free party at this flashy casino, and we were all wondering what was going to happen. We were having champagne and they were really putting it up, and the maitre d' came over and said, "Miss Laning, the manager would like very much for you to come to his office. He has a gold cigarette case with sapphires and diamonds he'd like to present to you. He was embarrassed that you lost your cigarette case." Well, of course, I was not about to get myself involved with a gangster. And so I said that I couldn't possibly accept it. My cigarette case was of sentimental value and certainly no intrinsic value. And so shortly afterwards we decided that it was time to leave, but it was really very funny because during the day these detectives had come to interview me and each one didn't know the other was coming. I wound up with about four of the New York police top detectives there, and I was sitting with them, we always stayed at the St. Regis, and talking to them and telling them what I knew about this brief experience I had.

C: That was really something.

P: But it really was fun, in a way.

C: Getting involved in something that was dramatic.

P: That was really close.

C: Well, you went on to Philadelphia next, that's where the Fleet went and you were feted there.

P: Yes, the Stokesburys gave a huge reception for us and I remember we stayed at the Bellevue Stratford, of course, which we were well acquainted with, and I decided that I had to take a stitch in a dress or something before this expedition to the Stokesburys in Whitemarsh, and so I thought, well, I'll just run across to Wanamakers where I'd buy a spool of thread. Well, I suddenly realized that I couldn't do anything without a detective. We were guests of the city and there were pictures in Wanamakers, three pictures of my father with the Navy flag and the American flag - the Navy had gone out for this, and so I had to go shopping with a detective on my heels and run around back. And then we were to have a motorcycle escort to go out and about and as we were circling the City Hall some man struck out with a brick and tried to throw it at our car. So that was a little exciting.

C: A little excitement there.

P: Well, of course, this party was going forward and then, many years later when my father was the governor of the Naval Home, Mrs. Stokesbury decided to have another reception for us and that's where I apparently met my husband. He claimed he was there and decided he was going to marry me that day.

C: Do you remember speaking with him, talking to him?

P: No, no. I had met so many people. Doris Duke was there with her first husband and so forth. All of these people were just going through the line and...

C: Oh, I see, it was just passing through a line, but then you picked up the relationship later, I guess.

P: Well, ten days later somebody else gave me a cocktail party and he was there and I met him, and then about ten days later he got around to call me up on the phone and ask me for a date.

C: Oh, I see, so you got a more formal presentation.

P: But he claims he went to the party and his family said, "Oh, yes, he did, and he came home and said he met the girl he was going to marry."

C: Oh, for heaven's sake, love at first sight.

P: I don't know, but anyway.

C: I guess it was. That's very interesting. After that, your father was to be the CO of the Battle Fleet as admiral in California.

P: Oh, yes.

C: Where was he based then? Do you remember what city?

P: We were in Long Beach.

C: You were back to Long Beach.

P: Yes, I guess we had a little house there.

C: Was there anything memorable about this period of time?

P: Well, I remember, of course, being very proud of my father. I always was. He was such a dear daddy. He was a wonderful father.

C: Can you comment on his character and personality?

P: He had a wonderful disposition. Both of my parents had good dispositions. They were devoted to each other. He was, I remember when I was, well, we were in Newport and I was struggling with my algebra and I couldn't quite make it work, and my father sitting down and explaining, "Well, now it's like detective work," and he made it so interesting and from then on math was my best subject. And I had geometry and so forth, but I didn't go to college.

C: Well, I think it's the way it's presented.

P: But he made it interesting. I was just thinking of my grandchildren who have struggled with math and if they'd only had my father.

C: So he was easy to get along with.

P: Oh, yes, and very interested in everything I did. I was the apple of his eye, of their eyes.

C: And I assume that he had a wonderful reputation in the Navy as a fair person and a good administrator.

P: He really did. They always said he had the happiest ship in the Fleet and his men could always sit down and talk with him.

C: So he was open.

P: Very open, and he'd listen to their side, and they said he was stern but he was fair, but he was never stern with me.

C: Well, that's important. After the Battle Fleet he went on to the Navy Yard in Brooklyn, CO of that and the Third Naval District. What were his feelings about giving up command at sea?

P: Oh, it was devastating. My parents loved to be driven in the car, so they decided they would drive east. We had a little maid that had gone to stay with us and then the chauffeur and they drove east, but I was anxious to go to Washington because I was having a wonderful time in Washington, lots of friends there, so I had some special party, so I went ahead by train and there was another navy girl going on the train too, so we traveled east together. But Mother really said she really watched my father age twenty years during that trip. Being with the Fleet, it really was his love and, of course, I'm sure he had hopes of being commander in chief. And Admiral Reeves in Washington had asked us to stay on an extra year, which held up the promotions all down the line.

C: So he never achieved that final goal, but his next assignment obviously was shore based. That was the last assignment for him then?

P: Yes, we were in that wonderful old Woodson's house in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. And there was an oval dining room and Mother bought beautiful red damask curtains to go with the oval carpet. Apparently, the Metropolitan copied that dining room, I think, a reproduction of it. And then, of course, just over looking the ships graves, there was like a little oasis up on the hill and we swam, I guess, because it was in the slums of

Brooklyn, but my friend thought it was great fun to come and have a guard at the gate and so forth. It was a lovely house with two big green houses. I always had orchids and gardenias to wear. We entertained a lot and, of course, I was in New York all the time at parties.

C: Was there anything memorable that happened? What about the ship's christening then?

P: Well, the *HONOLULU* was christened at that time. The governor of Honolulu had a daughter my age and I was asked, of course, to be a maid of honor, her sister-in-law was the other maid of honor, and we went all through the ceremonies and she launched the ship and we had a luncheon, I guess, at our house. And then for some reason, we were on the admiral's barge going over to Governor's Island or the Statue of Liberty or something was going on, and there was this young man that was always sort of following her around and in time I asked, "What is his name?" "I don't know, I have never seen that man in my life." She said, "I thought he was a friend of yours." So I said to my father's aide, I think we have an imposter here and this man had simply attached himself to the official party, and we could see him in the barge there with us and having lunch at our house and so forth. He was perfectly nice looking, but his ambition in life was to have his picture taken standing behind somebody who had received honor at the reviewing stand. But that was interesting. And then there was also at that time that I was asked to christen the *Salmon*, a submarine, and that was very exciting. I went up to New London and I realized that they asked me what I would like as a souvenir, a rock or something else, and I said I'd like a rock, and I thought, well, I better make a little speech, so on the way up I was trying to work out a speech, and I had a friend from Brooklyn who was going to be one of the maids of honor, and my dear friend Martha Leland was coming down from Boston to be

the other. There was a party the night before, which was fun, and the following morning my mother came rushing in, "Hester, get up, get up, they are knocking the block out, every one from under the ship." She was so afraid that they'd go off without my being there to christen it. So, of course, we arrived on the stand and I had been instructed how to break that bottle, which isn't as easy as you might think, and the ship had blisters on either side, as they are called, and somebody said, "Just hit the bottom of the bottle on the blister." Now my bottle had some sort of fabric around it, but they had not tied the proverbial string so that if the sponsor missed it could be pulled up and some member of the crew would smash the bottle and the ship would be properly christened. Well, suddenly, the admiral came and all these thousands of workmen and a few thousand there, and it was time. The ship started to pull out and I whacked it as hard as I could and it didn't break, and so I quickly jumped and broke it sideways across the bow, and thank heavens it broke because there was no way of retrieving the bottle, you see. So I did it. And I still wake up in the middle of the night wondering whether I was going to make it, but after there was this big luncheon and, of course, I was the guest of honor and I was presented with a little diamond wristwatch with little diamonds, but it was sweet and I love it. Well, I was simply thrilled and so I gave my speech and the chaplain said, "You know, you are the only sponsor that has ever given a speech. I think you ought to repeat this in the other room where the three thousand men are having lunch." So I thought, I can't remember it again, and I got stage fright, but I got up there and said something anyway, but I remember that it was such an anti-climax being asked to do that again.

C: Well, I know you prepared one thing and then you got switched to something else.

P: But it was very interesting being in New York at that time and we met many famous people who came to town.

C: Oh, yes, I'm sure you did.

P: And we would have to entertain them. I think I told you the story about La Guardia at our house and his leaning against the tilt-top table that had a pair of very handsome, very feminine globes on it, and apparently he leaned just enough so that the back of that table came down and broke one of the hurricane globes. And so the Filipino boy got the glass up and set the table back up with one globe left on it, and La Guardia was very concerned about whether it was going to be saved, but somebody in his group said, "Well, you know, I was only doing this," and with that he leaned against the table and the top flopped down and broke the other. My mother was devastated, but anyway, that was one of those experiences...

C: That occurred in that time period. When your father retired from the Navy from this position, how did he feel about his impending retirement and how did you and your mother feel?

P: We all dreaded it for him because it had been his life and our lives too, of course, and we really weren't sure just where we wanted to live and what we were going to do. And then we heard that he was going to be made governor of the Naval Home in Philadelphia, and I took rather a dim view of it because I knew the Naval Home was in sort of a slum area and I thought, "Oh dear, this is really my end." But the family saw the house but they didn't tell me what an interesting old mansion it was, they just thought they'd let me wait and see. So, I remember when we drove into the grounds and there were these three handsome buildings, all with these columns, and

these mansions on the other side covered with beautiful wrought iron. It was federal style. I was very pleased because it was a charming house. It had a double living room on one side and then another living room and then a dining room, so there was plenty of room for entertaining. So then shortly afterwards, I met my husband and I was married in that house.

C: Did your father enjoy his tenure?

P: Oh, yes. He kept working on his "Admiral's Yarn" and he was very interested in this old building in the back, a big old red building. I think it was maybe the very first military hospital in the country, and it was just then he decided that he should get the money from the Congress to restore it, because they could have 350 more old men live in this building. He did get his act through Congress and he was halfway there, through the restoration, when he died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

C: That was in what year?

P: February 2, 1941. Absolutely, yes.

C: Where was he buried?

P: Annapolis. They never liked Washington, I think, because of their agonies through the Sims-Daniels case. They never wanted to be a part of it and they had such happy memories of Annapolis. So they're both there.

C: Both of your parents?

P: Yes, both of them. And, of course, it was a military funeral there with the midshipmen. I remember going to the superintendent's house, going

there with my husband, and we were waiting to hold the services from the start, and we could hear the drums coming from Bancroft Hall to the chapel. They were getting closer and closer and closer and I thought Mother was going to collapse, and I was trying to talk to her and say that now we'll do this and that. On the day my father died, my husband got his orders in to the Army and he was slated for Harrisburg. It was a very difficult time.

C: During this whole period of time, in connection with the Navy, do you remember meeting any of the outstanding individuals? I'll give you some names and if you remember them, tell me your impressions of them. For example, CNO William Veazie Pratt.

P: Oh, yes, Admiral Pratt. He was the previous president of the War College and Mrs. Pratt was a great friend of my mothers, and my mother went down to visit her and so forth. And then they had a niece who had a coming-out party at the War College. I can't remember what her name was now, but they had no children, but they had this niece and she was summering in Newport.

C: Do you remember Raymond Spruance? What was your impression of him?

P: Oh, yes. He was a friend of my family's, a naval officer, but I knew most of the greats, as I call them, the ones that became the stars of the Second World War. And, I guess, I don't remember individual impressions, but I think the Spruances were dear friends. I did a portrait of the daughter Margaret. But Admiral Spruance, Admiral Kincaid, they were dear friends, and Admiral Halsey, of course. Margaret Halsey asked me to be in her wedding, but I couldn't because I was going to Mardi Gras in New Orleans and, of course, he became such a beloved admiral.

C: Oh, yes. Do you remember Admiral Reeves at all or Admiral Leahy?

P: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

C: They were both top people, and Admiral King from World War II. After your marriage, was that in 1938? Did you maintain any navy connections?

P: Oh, I still had my old friends that we would meet when we could, and always there was someone in Washington. And then, of course, my husband was sent to Walter Reed Hospital so we lived there at the beginning of the war. And then he was to be sent overseas with the Twentieth General Hospital at the University of Pennsylvania and his group was sent down to Tuscaloosa, and it was decided that I should move back to Philadelphia because I was pregnant and my father had just died, and others thought we should move back. But I had my aunt and uncle and cousins in Washington, and loads of friends. I really didn't want to leave, but he also felt that I was not really doing anything useful for the war. Here I was, of course, later it turned out I had twins, so we would be occupying quarters someplace, an apartment or something, that a war worker might need. So it was decided that we should leave Washington.

C: Which you did. What are your thoughts on navy life, on your experiences during the 31 years you were involved with the Navy?

P: I think I had a wonderful life. I don't know that I appreciated it at the time, but when I look back and think of my experiences, I really was a very lucky girl, I really was.

C: They were unique, the opportunities to travel, the social life.

P: Yes. I think any of the navy juniors would say the same thing.

C: Do you have any advice for navy families today?

P: My word, everything is so very, very different and, of course, I was not married to a naval officer. I didn't really want to marry into the Navy because I wanted a home, to live someplace and grow some roots. And I have never lived any place three years when I married Sarge Pepper. Then, of course, the war came along and we didn't live here three years, and he was ordered to Washington. So I just kept on moving, and it wasn't until we moved to Connecticut after the war in 1952 and lived there for 21 years that I really felt I could establish a base.

C: Staying in one place really didn't materialize until later. Did your father have a ship christened and named in his honor?

P: Oh, yes, a destroyer, and that would have been, let's see, my Lanny was about two and a half then and she was born in 1942, so that would have been 1944-1945, and we went down to meet the crews and visit and stayed with whoever the admiral was there, and we took Lanny because I felt that even though she was very, very young that she could say later on that she had seen a christening and my mother was the sponsor.

C: Oh, she was?

P: Yes. So, we both belonged to this society of sponsors, but Mother hit the bottle of champagne. She tossed it. And then years later I did a tea on board when they were going to put the ship in mothballs. Where it is now, of course, I don't know.

C: I don't know. I looked it up in the Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships and I know it is in mothballs.

P: Well, it was to be on the Hudson River some place, but that was so many years ago.

C: Yes, it was. That was back in the 1950s. 1940's.

P: I was hoping maybe you could find it.

C: No.

P: But my submarine, the *Salmon*, was lost during the war.

C: Oh, was it? Where did your mother live after your father's death in 1941?

P: Well, of course, Sarge went overseas, so we joined forces and, oh my word, here we were with three little babies under two and half years old. Oh, I had an excellent nurse for the first six months, but after that it was trying one and another and so forth, and really it was very hectic, but it was marvelous fun having twins and a little girl. It was such a wonderful family.

C: Now, is your daughter older?

P: Yes, she is older. She was less than two and one half when they were born, so they were all little infants.

C: You said your mother and you joined forces and took an apartment together.

P: Exactly, yes.

C: And where did you eventually end up?

P: Well, then when Sarge came back, we were sent to Richmond. They had so many doctors overseas that they didn't have enough doctors left to take care of the service people in this country, so they did not leave flu packs in Washington. They sent in some serum for scrub typhus, because our soldiers were dying like flies of this scrub typhus, so he developed a strain and took it to the animals at Walter Reed, and one by one they died on the way back, but one rabbit survived and they got that rabbit to Walter Reed and that's what they use today for scrub typhus. And so they decided to keep him in this country, which was simply marvelous. And he was named chief of medicine at Maguire Hospital in Richmond, Virginia, and that was delightful. He loved Richmond and when the war came to an end we almost stayed there. But then we came back to Philadelphia and we were here for six or seven years, and he decided that he would go into insurance medicine, at least we'd know where the check was coming every month because the doctors, you know, they're always the last ones to get paid. And it's rather precarious whether you were going to get paid at all. So he decided to go into insurance medicine, also he just wanted to hunt and fish, hunt and fish, and he just made up his mind he'd find a job where he could go off on the weekends to hunt and fish, so he did. And then in 1952, he was offered a job at Connecticut Mutual, so we were there for 21 years. He was a medical director, and it was delightful. It really was. We had a beautiful house. The children by that time, they were a little bit older, and they went to two schools in Hartford. Lanny went to the Oxford School,

and the boys went to Junior School, I believe. Then they went on to boarding school, Lanny to Farmington and the boys to the Gunnery. They really don't miss Hartford very much. They felt that their ties were in Philadelphia and so they all came back here to college, Lanny to Bryn Mawr, and the twins to the University of Pennsylvania and, of course, the twins have spent their lives here, so this is where the action was for us. We always felt that when we moved to Hartford that we'd come back here when Sarge retired, to Philadelphia, and we did. And we bought a small house at the time, at the suggestion of it, right up from the boys and their families. We bought a house next door to them and it had a swimming pool. I think that was one of the things they had their eye on, but it was perfectly lovely because we had their friends and their boy, and my son, Terry's two daughters, and Lanny would come with her two children, and I would sit there and watch them all splashing around. And it was wonderful, wonderful, wonderful that we had been very close, and now here I am in a retirement home, Waverly Heights, and one son, Sarge, the lawyer, lives five minutes away, and the other son, Terry, who's administrator at Chester County Hospital, and he lives five minutes away in the other direction very close to Waverly.

C: Close family ties. Do you have anything else to say about the Navy?

P: I think, as I said, for most girls bought up in the Navy, it was a wonderful experience, and I happened to be able to travel a great deal because I was not a member of a big family. So wherever my father went, he wanted us waiting on the dock or waiting at that dock or this dock or something. We had the excitement of seeing the Fleet coming in.

C: Oh, it is. I got to see it in Hawaii, one of the aircraft carriers coming in, and it was quite a majestic sight.

P: Oh, it is. Of course, I still have the Navy in my blood. There's no doubt about it. But I've been out of it, but it's marvelous to be connected to the Navy, which has just really happened in the last couple of years that I've been taken back into the fold.

C: Well, thank you so much for your reminiscences and remarks and we will have them transcribed and edited soon.

P: I am very honored in your interest that I have anything that's worth contributing.

C: It was very interesting and enlightening.

P: I'm looking forward to the book coming out.

C: Thank you very much.

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