

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE WAVES

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WAVES

NO. 273

DONNA MAE BORKENHAGEN MAZZONI

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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INTERVIEWEE: DONNA MAE BORKENHAGEN MAZZONI

INTERVIEWER: EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF THE WAVES

DATE: SEPTEMBER 4, 2001

EMC: This is the first oral history interview with Donna Mae Borkenhagen Mazzoni of 93 Miriam Road in New Britain, Connecticut. Today's date is September 4, 2001. My name is Evelyn Cherpak, and the interview is taking place in her home in New Britain. Mrs. Mazzoni was a WAVE in World War II. Donna, I want to thank you for allowing me to come in to your home and to interview you for the Naval War College Program on the WAVES in World War II. I'd like to begin by asking you where you were born.

DBM: Crookston, Minnesota.

EMC: Crookston, Minnesota. When you were born? Can you give me the date?

DBM: Sure, everybody else knows it, June 1st, 1919.

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

DBM: So I don't really remember too much, I know he was a carpenter. I'll tell you I don't remember too much anymore.

EMC: Did your mother work at all?

DBM: Before she was married, she worked in a dry goods store.

EMC: But after she was married?

DBM: No, never.

EMC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

DBM: I had two brothers and one sister.

EMC: So there were four of you. Did you spend your growing up years in Crookston, Minnesota?

DBM: Yes, I did.

EMC: Did you graduate from the local high school?

DBM: Yes, Crookston High.

EMC: How large was the town, may I ask? Do you know population

wise?

DBM: Only about 8,000.

EMC: And where exactly is it in Minnesota?

DBM: It's on the border with North Dakota.

EMC: Oh.

DBM: Most people would equate it somewhere around Grand Forks, North Dakota.

EMC: Oh, I see. Yes.

DBM: We have a missile base there.

EMC: Sure. So it's cold country.

DBM: It's cold country.

EMC: Yes. What did you do after you graduated from high school?

DBM: I worked, first of all, in an insurance company for an insurance salesman, and then a realtor.

EMC: Oh, a realtor. Was that in Crookston?

DBM: Yes.

EMC: Did your family have any Navy connections at all?

DBM: No, except I'm sure my father came over from Germany on a boat or a ship, I should say.

EMC: So you were pretty much land locked.

DBM: Oh, yes.

EMC: Did any of your friends or relatives join the Service after the war began on December 7, 1941?

DBM: Well, my two brothers. One was drafted and he went into the Army Air Corp and he had service in New Zealand.

EMC: Yes.

DBM: And my other brother entered in the Army Air Corp and he was a mechanic, a technician. And my sister, she went into the WAVES the same time I did. She went to school in Oklahoma. And from there she went out to Terminal Island in California.

EMC: Oh.

DBM: She was a yeoman.

EMC: Yes, it sounds like yeoman work. And what inspired you to join the WAVES?

DBM: Well, the fact that my two brothers were leaving, it just seemed like it was the patriotic thing to do.

EMC: Well, you were a military family then, all four of you.

DBM: Yes, we were.

EMC: Did your mother hang one of those little flags with the stars in the window?

DBM: Yes, four stars.

EMC: Fours stars, yes.

DBM: But she should have had the fifth star.

EMC: Yes, I guess. She was left and all her children in the service. Do you remember when Pearl Harbor was attacked? And do you remember your reaction to that startling event?

DBM: Well, I remember, of course, that I was in Crookston, but I do not remember really what I was doing. I am pretty sure I was at home.

EMC: It was Sunday.

DBM: Yes, and I was listening to the radio. Television had not come into the picture at that point.

EMC: Right, right. Do you remember being shocked by it at all?

DBM: Shocked?

EMC: Yes.

DBM: Oh, definitely. You know, you never thought of Japan as being an aggressor.

EMC: No. It was a big shock to most people. Did you keep up with news about the war before you enlisted? Do you think you were aware of what was going on?

DBM: Well, I think so. I think there probably was a daily discussion as to where, what and who was going into the service. I guess friends and neighbors, their sons and daughters were, you



know, scattering to the four winds.

EMC: Sure, absolutely. Well, how did you hear about the WAVES? Do you remember if you heard an announcement on the radio or posters or?

DBM: No, I do not remember, except that they were having an open enlistment, I think, at the time. I had friends who were in. And I thought it would be kind of something I could do to help out in the effort. But little did I know that my sister was going to be leaving with me at the same time, leaving my mother alone.

EMC: Right. Oh, so was your sister in the same town?

DBM: Yes. My sister was two years younger than I.

EMC: Oh.

DBM: Yes, and she left at the same time that I did.

EMC: Oh, so you both joined at the same time.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: What was attractive about the Navy versus the WACS or the Marines or the SPARS? In other words, why did you pick the Navy?

DBM: I think because they had made an effort to get us interested.

EMC: Did they have a recruiter in town?

DBM: I don't remember that they had one in town, but I know her name was Shields, and she came to Crookston. There was an enlistment program going on that we could attend, and they would talk about it. They would tell us what it was all about.

EMC: Oh, that's great.

DBM: And we were four or six of us; I think there must have been six of us all sworn in at the same time. I think that was in January of '44.

EMC: Oh, okay. So you joined around January of '44.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: And you enlisted, I assume, in Crookston?

DBM: Yes.

EMC: You didn't have to go to a major city. Did you have to take

tests and physicals there?

DBM: No, I don't remember taking any tests there.

EMC: Was there any publicity about your joining the WAVES in the newspaper? Sometimes in small town newspapers they wrote up articles.

DBM: I don't remember that there was.

EMC: How did your mother feel about your decision to join?

DBM: I often think about that now, but she never said don't go.

EMC: So she was supportive then?

DBM: Yes.

EMC: In a way, and you were about twenty-five?

DBM: Yes, my father had died a few years before. I think he died in 1940 or something like that. So she was left alone then, and that was the hard part, when she finally realized that we were all leaving the house at the same time.

EMC: Right, right. Well, you had to set off for basic training.

And where did you go for your basic training?

DBM: My basic training was at Hunter College in New York.

EMC: Did you go there by train?

DBM: Oh, yes.

EMC: Was it a train with other WAVES on it?

DBM: Yes. It picked up along the way; we went to Great Lakes first.

EMC: Oh, I see.

DBM: And then we went to Hunter College.

EMC: Do you remember anything about that train ride?

DBM: It was dirty.

EMC: Yes. A trainload of WAVES, I guess.

DBM: We had a lot of coal dust, I think, come in, too.

EMC: Well, had you ever been in New York City before?

DBM: No, I had not.

EMC: Was that kind of a shock to you, going to Hunter?

DBM: We didn't have any freedom while we were there, to tell you the truth. We had to work for our liberty, for our passes, and they were very few and far between. We were only there for six weeks, I think, or something like that.

EMC: Yes. But do you remember if New York City and Hunter and the whole experience was kind of overwhelming?

DBM: Well, it was. It was because, of course, we had to start taking shots we'd never had before, too. We went in April then.

EMC: Oh, you arrived in April?

DBM: Yes. And it was getting hot. And we had drill, I think, almost every day. And after our shots we were not feeling the greatest.

EMC: So, yes. And when you were at Hunter you must have lived in the apartments that were converted?

DBM: Yes, they were converted, yes. I think they were. It was

Hunter College. I think they were dorms.

EMC: They took over apartment houses, they said, and converted them and put the WAVES in them.

DBM: Oh, well, that could have been.

EMC: Do you remember how many people you had in your room, women?

DBM: I think there were four of us.

EMC: And did you have the bunk beds?

DBM: Yes, the double deckers. Some people had the three deckers.

EMC: Yes, you were lucky. Now when you were there you said you did, of course, have to march and you had to drill. Do you remember the captain's inspections on Saturday mornings?

DBM: Oh, no, I don't.

EMC: The white glove inspections?

DBM: Oh, yes, inspection, oh.

EMC: Right.

DBM: We didn't look forward to them, believe me. Because anything could mean that we were going to go back and clean again the rest of the day.

EMC: Did you pass, do you remember?

DBM: Some we did and some we didn't.

EMC: Oh. So then you had to go back and clean?

DBM: Yes.

EMC: That wasn't fun. Well, do you remember the classes that you had to take at Hunter? The kinds of classes.

DBM: No, I don't.

EMC: And your response to that. Do you remember if you had homework and you had to study for tests?

DBM: No, I don't remember.

EMC: How did you like the marching and the drilling that you had to undergo?

DBM: That wasn't too bad, except that it seemed as though it was so hot. It was the beginning of the season and out on the macadam it was that much hotter.

EMC: Did you like the Navy uniform?

DBM: Yes, I did.

EMC: That drew a lot of people in to the service, I think. Did you feel that you adjusted easily to the rules and the regulations and the discipline of Navy life?

DBM: I think I did, but I know there were others who did not.

EMC: Oh, really.

DBM: Yes, they fought it all the way. They wanted out the minute they got in.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes. That's interesting.

DBM: They didn't think it was going to be like that.

EMC: And were any of them your roommates, who were anti the WAVES?



DBM: No, I don't remember any of them being like that.

EMC: But, you knew of people.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: Who obviously got in and it wasn't what they expected. You mentioned that you had to earn your time off. Did you ever have any limited leave during the six weeks? Like a Saturday or a Sunday?

DBM: I think we probably did have one. I think we tried to contact a friend of mine who was in New York. She had been in a previous WAVE class and she was from my hometown.

EMC: Oh, that's interesting. Did you have an opportunity to participate in any extracurricular activities? I know there was a singing platoon and there was a newspaper. I wonder if you were assigned to any of those or volunteered for those?

DBM: No; not in New York.

EMC: Not in Hunter. Well, you finished your six weeks training there.

DBM: I got through.

EMC: You got through. Did you express a preference for the kind of billet you wanted after you finished training at Hunter?

DBM: Well, I think that was already pre-decided. I had had some code training.

EMC: Oh, where?

DBM: Morse Code training before the service. My brother was a ham radio operator and friends of his were also. And this friend of his, Bill, conducted the class; so I thought that would be kind of neat to learn the code, which I did then. And I had one or two steps ahead of some of them who hadn't had any code.

EMC: Right. Oh, that's interesting. Did you ever operate a ham radio?

DBM: No, I did not, but we did in Washington, DC. We did send code messages.

EMC: Yes, so you knew kind of the code. Was it the Morse Code?

DBM: The Morse Code, yes.

EMC: That you had to learn? Yes, that's great. So your billet was decided, you think?

DBM: I think so.

EMC: Based on your experience.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: And they did that. They tested people, I know.

DBM: Yes, that's something they did, they gave us aptitude tests. And, you know, what we had, and based on that they put us in a certain classification then for training.

EMC: Good and that happened so often. Well, if you were slated to become a radioman, so to speak--today they wouldn't call you a radioman, radio person maybe--you would need some additional training. And where did you go for this additional training?

DBM: Well, we went to Oxford, Ohio, to a training school there, Miami University. And there had been classes with both men and women there, but when we were there, there were two colleges, I believe, where they trained men separately from the women.

EMC: Oh, they segregated them now.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: So you were trained. How long did you spend at Miami U?

DBM: It might have been five months.

EMC: Oh, yes, that's a good twenty weeks of training. And do you remember how many WAVES were there being trained in your class? Was it large?

DBM: It was not huge, no.

EMC: Select group, I guess.

DBM: I guess so.

EMC: And what kinds of things did you learn during this twelve weeks?

DBM: Well, mostly how to receive and to send Morse code. And we had to take it down, you know, as receiving and send the message out in Morse Code.

EMC: Oh, that must have been.

DBM: And we would send it out in groups of five letters. And we never knew what the message was that we were learning. It was just a group of five letters and then they would check us to see if our sending was accurate and our receiving was also accurate.

EMC: So, in other words, you used letters. You didn't use dots and dashes?

DBM: Oh, we used dots and dashes representing letters.

EMC: I thought so.

DBM: Oh, yes.

EMC: Plus letters?

DBM: Well, you translated the ABCs into your dots and dashes.

EMC: Oh, into your dots and dashes.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: I see.

DBM: No, you had to be able to translate those in your head, you know.

EMC: Fast.

DBM: And as the messages were coming in over the earphones when you were receiving messages, you had to put them on a typewriter when they were sent.

EMC: Type it as you were receiving it. That's kind of difficult, I would think.

DBM: Well, it's like on a Dictaphone. If you're able to work from a Dictaphone, you knew what it was all about.

EMC: Right.

DBM: But you had to transcribe as, you know, as it came over, and on a Dictaphone you had to type it out. That's exactly what that was, too. You were taking in code and you had to translate it from dots and dashes to the ABCs or whatever.

EMC: Oh, I see, right, right.

DBM: And it all made sense after awhile.

EMC: You didn't put all the letters together or something in one long string. Oh, that's interesting. So that's what you learned

for the twenty weeks that you were there? I should have asked you that before, but did you get there by train?

DBM: Oh, yes, there was no other way.

EMC: No other way.

DBM: Unless it would have been bus.

EMC: Yes. So that's basically what your training was--the Morse Code sending and receiving for twenty weeks.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: I assume you stayed on the campus there?

DBM: Yes, we did.

EMC: And you had your training school right on the campus. Because this must have been pretty much summer?

DBM: Oh, yes.

EMC: Yes, summer time when you were there. Did you make any particular friends with any of the WAVES that were at this school with you?

DBM: Oh, yes, I did. And we kept in contact for quite a number of years, but little by little it seemed that we kind of lost track of each other.

EMC: Right, yes, that's the way, because you were there for a longer time than the other than at Hunter. Did you have any opportunities for recreation in Ohio at Miami U?

DBM: Oh, yes. We had the USO, of course, the USO was there. And then there was a place on the river there that we could go canoeing and things like that. There were activities set up for us.

EMC: Now did you fraternize with any of the men being trained there?

DBM: No, not really, unless we met them at the USO.

EMC: Yes.

DBM: That would be the only thing.

EMC: Right.

DBM: But we did not mix on the campus.



EMC: Right, right. So anyway you spent three months there. Well, did you have any kind of ceremony when you graduated? Or did you just receive the certificate and move on?

DBM: I don't remember there being anything in particular, no.

EMC: No graduation ceremony then. Well, after that you had to be stationed somewhere and where did the Navy send you? Where were you stationed?

DBM: I was very lucky. They sent me to Washington, D.C., where I had great duty.

EMC: Oh, and what department did you work for?

DBM: Communications. The Navy Communications Department in the Navy building there?

EMC: Okay. Main Navy. The big Main Navy building?

DBM: Yes.

EMC: That was in Washington, D.C. Who did you work for? Did you have a civilian supervisor or a Navy supervisor?

DBM: I always called him Chief, I assumed that he was in the Navy as well as we were.

EMC: Oh, sure.

DBM: I remember his name was Sy Morrison. And I think the "Sy" came from the fact that we each had initials that we used when we coded, when we sent over and received a message. And I remember mine as being EK. But I think his probably was "Sy," and it was because he was supervisor. And we had others, too. I know in going through the books I came across another one whose name was Danny. but I do not have the last name.

EMC: So they were Navy Chiefs probably that were supervising you.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: Now what was your rating at this point in time while you were in D.C.?

DBM: Well, when I left Ohio I had become Radioman First Class. And then I went on to receive Second and Third Class

EMC: Yes, during your service.

DBM: Although I notice on my papers, they had me down for Second Class when I went out.

EMC: Yes.

DBM: I have the, oh, whatever you want to call it.

EMC: Yes, the certificate that indicates that you were Third Class.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: Do you remember how large your office was in D.C. in the Communications Department? Were there many WAVES working there?

DBM: Oh, it was huge.

EMC: Oh, it was.

DBM: It was really quite large, yes. And we had a whole bank of machines set up there, they were, we called them MUX. There was multiplex, that's what it was, and they would receive the messages in code in five groups of five letters and we never knew what it meant, because the copy would be taken off and sent to the decoding department.

EMC: So you just received messages there?

DBM: And then we sent.

EMC: Sent them on?

DBM: Yes, well, we sent messages, most of what we sent were weather reports. It was NSS, which was Washington, D.C., to NERK, and that was to all the ships at sea.

EMC: Oh.

DBM: And so the ships at sea would be getting the message that we sent out, so we'd better be pretty good.

EMC: Yes, I wonder if you were sending them to the Central Pacific or the South Pacific?

DBM: We never knew.

EMC: Oh, you never knew? It could be anywhere.

DBM: Oh, no, we never knew.

EMC: So it was weather related data that you were sending out?

DBM: Yes.

EMC: And you were receiving messages that you sent on to another department?

DBM: They were always taking the duty of decoding from there on, we never knew what was in it, whether it was weather or whether, you know, there were other types of messages that ships might be sending.

EMC: Well, couldn't you have translated it with your knowledge?

DBM: No, no way.

EMC: No. Oh, I see.

DBM: No. Because it came in in groups of five letters.

EMC: Oh, oh, so it came in in letters not in dots or dashes.

DBM: It came in in letters.

EMC: Oh, I see.

DBM: On these multiplex machines, yes, mux machines, yes.

EMC: Did you call them lucks?

DBM: Mux, M-u-x.

EMC: M-u-x, okay. Oh, that's interesting. Yes, so they had to unscramble it?

DBM: Oh, it went up to a special department and they ran it through up there and only those people in that special department were allowed to. Because we don't know what came in.

EMC: Right, right, but you knew what you were sending out.

DBM: And they did not want us to know the positioning of ships and things like that either.

EMC: Right. Because loose lips sink ships. You probably remember that poster hanging there. But anyway what kind of a schedule did you work on in this office, in the communications office?

DBM: Well, we had two days, of, say, seven in the morning until three in the afternoon. And then we would have forty-eight hours off. And then we would go in from three to eleven for two days. And then we would go in from eleven to seven for two days. And this rotated and rotated.

EMC: Yes.

DBM: I had a little chart that I kept, telling me which days I was working, what time. Otherwise one day runs into the next, and you don't know what day you are in anymore and what hours.

EMC: Right.

DBM: What shift you are on.

EMC: Right and you had trouble sleeping then because of all these crazy hours?

DBM: Oh, goodness, yes.

EMC: Yes, that must have kind of disturbed.

DBM: Well, some of us seemed to thrive on it.

EMC: Yes. Oh, where did you live in Washington when you were working in the Navy Communications Department? Where did they domicile you?

DBM: That was in WAVES Quarters I on the Potomac Park. It's between the reflection pool and the Potomac River.

EMC: Oh, it's gone now, I guess.

DBM: Oh, definitely. Yes.

EMC: Was it a wooden barracks?

DBM: Yes.

EMC: How was it configured? Did you have any privacy?

DBM: Not a lot, not a lot. It was pretty much open.

EMC: Oh, bunks?

DBM: Bunks.

EMC: Again.

DBM: Yes, and you did have your own little closet to keep your things in. No, there weren't many luxuries really.

EMC: No, no, pretty basic. Did you eat there at WAVES Quarters I, or did you have to go to a refectory?

DBM: We ate, not right in that building, but no, we used to, on many a day we went in havelocks and raincoats into the mess hall.



EMC: Oh, really. All women though.

DBM: Yes. They finally caught up with us and told us no more of that. Of course, we had curlers in our hair and things like this. We were really ravishing beauties when we went in for breakfast in the morning.

EMC: Out of uniform.

DBM: Yes, out of uniform definitely.

EMC: Definitely. Did you enjoy your work at Navy Communications?

DBM: Yes, I enjoyed it a lot. I enjoyed the people I worked with.

EMC: Oh, that's great. So it was a friendly, congenial office.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: Well, that's good.

DBM: I remember working with Emily Saltonstall.

EMC: Oh.

DBM: She was on our crew at one point in time. And others that were high ranking, but very, very down to earth, nice people to be with.

EMC: Oh, that's good. Now was this Emily Saltonstall, a daughter of one of the Saltonstalls of Massachusetts?

DBM: She was.

EMC: Oh, so you met a variety of people. Did you like meeting people from all over the country in your experiences?

DBM: Oh, yes. I remember working with one of them now. A little girl. I think she was Korean, but I'm not sure; she might have been Chinese. Her name was Lam, her last name was Lam. I don't remember asking her, or making any inquiry as to where she came from.

EMC: Yes, well, that's interesting, so you met a variety of people there. Did you make any friends that lasted a bit, either in your WAVES Quarters I domicile or in your office?

DBM: Yes. As with those in the other places where we lived and worked, we did make friends and we did keep in contact for some years. In fact, my husband and I went down to Washington, D.C. to

see a friend that I had, well, I didn't bunk with her, but she was one of the people that I knew down there.

EMC: Well, that's great that she stayed there. I found that true of so many of the WAVES; that they have kept in contact over the years. Well, you had a crazy work schedule with alternating hours, but did you have anytime for recreation or social life?

DBM: In Washington, it was fun.

EMC: What did you do?

DBM: Well, we always had a chance to do tourist attractions and things like that. Blue Ridge Mountains, the Monastery, the zoo. And they arranged picnics for us. The Chief had a place out on Silver Spring.

EMC: Springfield, Virginia?

DBM: No, it's either down on one of the lakes there, anyway. I mean on the river. And he always told us we could go out and use his cottage out there, use his boat and things like that. And they were very good to us. They realized all the tension that we were under that was not a part of our lives before, so they tried to get us to do things. And there was always bowling after the 11:00 shift at night. Nobody felt like going home and going to

sleep then. So we always went out, got something to eat, you know, coffee and then we went bowling. I also remember going up to the Roger Smith Hotel, and they always had bands and things up there. Dance bands and whatnot. We had some nice times in Washington, D.C.

EMC: Oh, that's good. That's great.

DBM: So it wasn't all work and no play.

EMC: Now did you feel that your job, as you mentioned a few minutes ago, the tension you were under, did you feel that there was pressure in this job?

DBM: Only when I first went there. Because everything was new and I didn't really know what was expected of me. The type of people. Who was on your side, in other words?

EMC: Oh, yes, right. Did you work with any civilians at all? Were there any civilians in your office?

DBM: I don't remember there being any.

EMC: Probably all Navy?

DBM: I bet you they were Navy or else you'd better be in the

service somewhere.

EMC: Yes.

DBM: Especially, you know, for the men.

EMC: Right. Did you have any contacts with civilians on the outside while you were touring Washington? And did you notice any reaction on their part to the WAVES in uniform?

DBM: I think in some of the stores that we were made aware that we were WAVES. I don't know about other parts of the service but I assume that they were treated the same way.

EMC: Did they treat you well or did they look down on you?

DBM: They kind of looked down on us.

EMC: That's what I thought.

DBM: Yes, and some of them, in the bigger stores, you wouldn't notice a thing.

EMC: Yes, there was that reaction. And some people have reported that, you know, the civilians seemed on the outside, very positive about the service.

DBM: Well, we weren't making very much money so, of course, we didn't have a lot of money to spend either.

EMC: Right, right. Did you have to buy War Bonds then? Or did they deduct them?

DBM: We did not have to, but we did. I think I bought some. My mother kept them for us.

EMC: Oh, that's good. Yes, I know a lot of the WAVES had to buy War Bonds or at least they were deducted from their pay. Well, did you meet your husband in Washington, D.C.?

DBM: Yes, I did. But it's funny, I do not remember just where I met him?

EMC: Oh. Now what service was he in?

DBM: He was in the Navy.

EMC: Oh, he was in the Navy, too. So it was some occasion in Washington. Now did you go out with him during the rest of your time in D.C.?

DBM: Oh, off and on, yes.

EMC: Oh, interesting. So that was great. I guess a lot of the women met their husbands in the war. That's where the men were. Did you experience any harassment or ill treatment in the Navy at all, by anyone?

DBM: No, I can't.

EMC: So you were well treated. Was there anything you didn't like about your assignment at Main Navy, in communications?

DBM: Well, if there was, I sort of put it aside, because it was my choice. You asked for it, now don't gripe.

EMC: Right. Did anything exciting or amusing or outstanding or different happen during your stay there? Your time in Washington and your job? Anything that sticks out?

DBM: Well, we were there for VE-Day and, of course, that was quite a celebration then at Radio Central there.

EMC: Oh, VE-Day, not VJ-Day?

DBM: VE.

EMC: Right. That's May. That's over in Europe, because everybody

says I don't remember that. I remember VJ-Day. But why was it such a big celebration in your unit?

DBM: Well, probably the fact that most of our messages probably had been directed to, in the direction of the East Coast.

EMC: Yes, ships going over there.

DBM: And I think we were more aware at that time of what was going on in Germany and, well, France.

EMC: Right, right, the retaking of France, the invasion of France. So how did you celebrate? Did you go out anywhere?

DBM: We went out in the evening, but everybody else was celebrating, too. So, you know, you didn't really want to get mixed in with a crowd too much for fear that someone was going to overdo.

EMC: Yes, right, right. Just before that, just before VE day, Franklin D. Roosevelt died. Do you remember that at all and the feeling in the office?

DBM: Yes, it was a shocked feeling. You know, that the bottom started to drop out because we used to listen to his fireside chats and whatnot. He seemed to, you know, be calling the nation



together to stand in back of the services now.

EMC: Yes, so that was said. Did you march in his funeral, some of the WAVES did, or did you attend or go out in the street then?

DBM: No, we worked.

EMC: Well, August 15th was VJ Day, which was, you know, a momentous time do you remember that celebration?

DBM: I do not remember it.

EMC: Isn't that something. Because that's the end of the war?

DBM: I know.

EMC: And Washington must have been really jumping then. But anyway, during your service, you were in about a year and a half, weren't you?

DBM: Yes.

EMC: Yes, about a year and a half. Did you keep up with news about the war?

DBM: Yes, as much as I could. We didn't get a daily paper there.

EMC: Oh. You didn't. Did you write letters to your parents, to your mother, I should say, or your friends?

DBM: Oh, yes, I wrote my mother every week.

EMC: Did she have those letters, keep them?

DBM: She kept them for me, and I just threw them away about a year ago now.

EMC: Oh, no, they must have been wonderful.

DBM: I didn't know what to do with them, and a big stack of them there and she had kept them. And she had tied them with a pretty ribbon.

EMC: Oh, I wish I had them because they are wonderful, describing your daily activities. Oh, well, I caught up with you a year too late. How did you feel about the end of the war, personally?

DBM: Well, I thought it was a long time coming.

EMC: And you must have been happy?

DBM: And, of course, the Japanese have never been able to feel that it was their fault. That this whole thing, you know, got out of hand.

EMC: Right, right. People are demanding apologies from them. Did you ever have a chance to meet Mildred McAfee who was Director of the WAVES?

DBM: No, I don't remember ever meeting her?

EMC: When were you discharged from the Navy? What date? Do you remember?

DBM: My separation there was October 21st 1945.

EMC: So you stayed on about two months after the war was over.

DBM: That's about it.

EMC: Did you receive any medals for your service?

DBM: No, I don't remember ever receiving any medals.

EMC: How did you feel about leaving the Navy? Were you happy, sad?

DBM: I was sad.

EMC: Why were you sad?

DBM: Because I'd meet so many friends there, and it just seemed that I would have liked to have that go on and on.

EMC: That's great. Do you think if you had the opportunity to stay in the Navy at that point in time that you would have stayed in?

DBM: I think I would have.

EMC: Well, if women were allowed to. But anyway, you had to leave and how did they prepare you at the Separation Center for discharge from the Navy? Do you remember what process you had to go through?

DBM: No, I do not.

EMC: Were you discharged in Washington?

DBM: Great Lakes.

EMC: Oh, Great Lakes. You had to go back to Great Lakes.

DBM: Yes.

EMC: That's where I guess you began your journey. Did you feel that when you were in the WAVES that they had a strong sense of camaraderie and esprit de corps?

DBM: I thought so.

EMC: They were all working together?

DBM: Yes, I think that we all felt that way, and we felt that way about the boys, the men in the Navy also. We were all working for the same thing.

EMC: Did you feel that the WAVES was a smoothly run organization? That everything went smoothly for you and your training and your advanced training and the like?

DBM: I think so, I know there were some rough moments, but, of course, that was because everything was so new, so different. And there were times when you probably would say, "Why did I get in to this?" You know you didn't feel that things were going the way you thought they would. But I enjoyed it all. I really enjoyed it. I did.

EMC: Good. Did you know anyone who was discharged for

disciplinary reasons?

DBM: No, I never was in the company of anyone who had disciplinary problems.

EMC: Yes, who had discipline problems. Did your WAVES experience change or redirect your life in anyway?

DBM: Well, maybe, inasmuch as I met my husband there and that led me to Connecticut instead of probably my staying in Minnesota or going west.

EMC: That's a big redirection, yes. Did you feel that the war made you more independent and self-reliant?

DBM: Well, I think so. It makes you more broad-minded and then more willing to accept.

EMC: That's good.

DBM: We didn't have as many people from various nations where I grew up. Very few were Blacks, even Italian, very few and far between.

EMC: Oh, yes. You were probably all German, Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish in that part of the world.

DBM: Right.

EMC: Did you have any ambitions to pursue radio work or any other career as a result of your experience in the Navy?

DBM: No, I think what I probably would have liked to have done was to become an Airline Hostess.

EMC: Oh, really, yes, that's a glamorous career.

DBM: I thought it would even be nicer with the travel you got out of it. But at that time you had to have been a nurse.

EMC: Right.

DBM: And I did not have that training, so.

EMC: Well, you went back to Minnesota you mentioned earlier after the war was over and did you resume your work there?

DBM: Yes, I did. I had been working for the highway department. And my job was held for me if I wanted to come back to it. And I did for a short time then. After being married, then I came out this way.

EMC: Oh, when were you married?

DBM: In 1946.

EMC: Right, so it was, you know, right after you got out of the service. And then you moved to Connecticut?

DBM: Then I moved to Connecticut--New Britain here, yes.

EMC: Right after that. Yes. Did you feel that what women were expected to do and be, changed when the war was over? Do you think women had ambitions of any sort? Or do you think they were happy to settle in to a domestic situation?

DBM: Well, since WAVES I don't know, but I know from all the people who worked in Fafnirs, Stanley Works and the various factories around here in the East and also those who lived out in the West and worked in the airplane factories, that their lives had changed tremendously. And it had made them more equal, more free perhaps. They had their own spending money and things like that. Of course, many of them had to work, because at that point their soul mate may not have come back from active duty and they may have had children that they had to support.

EMC: Yes, exactly. Grandmothers taking care of children after that. Did you maintain any service friendships when the war was



over?

DBM: Well, at this point, very few.

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

DBM: No.

EMC: There were a couple. Do you belong to any WAVE organizations, like WAVES National or the Connecticut unit?

DBM: No. There is one in Rocky Hill.

EMC: When you settled in New Britain in 1946, did you work here?

DBM: I didn't have a job when I came here. I went to work at Corbin Lock.

EMC: Downtown in New Britain. Did you stay there long?

DBM: I was there for quite some time. Then I left that and went to work for the Housing Authority. I was there for many years.

EMC: You retired from that.

DBM: Yes, I retired from there.

EMC: Have you ever thought about your WAVE days after you came here? Do you ever reminisce?

DBM: I didn't know anybody here to talk to about them, and didn't have any friends, except Ruthe, who was in the Navy and a girl from Southington, Pauline Klimek. I think she was in the WACS.

EMC: In 1997, they dedicated the ~~W~~IMSA monument, the memorial, in Arlington. Many people registered there. Did you have any outstanding, any memory of your service in the WAVES or any question that I missed?

DBM: You've covered it.

EMC: How would you sum up your service in the WAVES?

DBM: Very enjoyable. Very informative. A wider view on life.

EMC: Thank you very much for this interview, Donna.

[End of Interview]