

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF THE WAVES

WAVES IN WORLD WAR II

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Celeste Griffin

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Interviewee: Celeste Griffin

Interviewer: Dr. Evelyn M. Cherpak

Subject: WAVES in World War II

Date: March 11, 2003

EMC: This is the first oral history interview with Celeste Griffin of East Providence, Rhode Island, who was an officer in the WAVES in World War II. The interview is taking place in my office at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Today's date is March 11, 2003, and I'm the curator of the Naval Historical Collection, Evelyn Cherpak. Celeste, I'm so pleased that you are able to come down today for the interview on your time in the WAVES, your career in the WAVES. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you where and when you were born?

CG: I was born in Providence, Rhode Island on June 9, 1919. Actually at the Parade St., Hospital.

EMC: Does it still exist?

CG: No.

EMC: So you're a native Rhode Islander?

CG: Yes, I am.

EMC: What did your father do for a living in Providence?

CG: My Dad was a wholesale commission merchant. He sold butter and eggs to small stores.

EMC: Because we did have small stores then. No large supermarkets. So he was a wholesaler then. Did your mother work at all?

CG: No.

EMC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

CG: I have one sister who is eight years younger than I. She has fifteen or sixteen grandchildren.

EMC: Wow, so you got a whole network. But she was too young to join the WAVES.

CG: Oh, yes.

EMC: So we don't have anyone else to interview. Did you spend your growing up years in Providence?

CG: I lived in Providence through the sixth grade and moved to Barrington for 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>. Then I went to Pembroke College, Brown University. I graduated in 1941.

EMC: What did you major in at Brown?

CG: I majored in Psychology.

EMC: That's very interesting. Why did your family move to Barrington?

CG: It was our summer home. The Depression, actually. Dad converted our summer home to an all year round. That's why we moved to West Barrington.

EMC: That's a lovely area; West Barrington is now Barrington. You graduated from College then in what year?

CG: 1941. I just had my 60<sup>th</sup> reunion.

EMC: Yes, that's great. What did you do after college? Where did you work? What did you do?

CG: I worked in the Registrar's Office, Brown University. I was in charge of transcripts. Most requests were from graduates applying to officer's training in the Naval Reserve. A degree was a requirement.

EMC: Oh, for heavens sake.

CG: There was an increase in requests due to the draft and a deluge after December 7, 1941. To keep up with the demand, the Registrar stopped typing transcripts and just photographed academic record cards.

EMC: So this was after you graduated in June '41.

CG: Yes. I went in the Navy in October '42.

EMC: Just to double back a little. Did your family ever have any Navy connections?

CG: No.

EMC: Where were you on December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

CG: I was riding in a car with a friend's family on the way to Saunderstown. It came over the radio. My first question was where's Pearl Harbor?

EMC: Yes. Many people didn't know.

CG: I didn't know.

EMC: What was your reaction after you found out where it was and what happened?

CG: The attack on Pearl Harbor was appalling. To me it was far worse than the destruction of the twin towers on 9/11.

EMC: Because it was world wide. The WAVES weren't established yet. It was July of 1942 when the WAVES organization was legislated.

CG: Yes. The first class was an August group.

EMC: Right. The August group. July 30<sup>th</sup> was the day of the founding of the WAVES and then the August group that came in were the leadership and teachers and whatever. But you joined in October, as you said in 1942. How did you hear about the WAVES?

CG: I think Mildred McAfee asked the presidents and deans of colleges to write graduates who were considered potential WAVES. There is a letter in my file from the dean of Pembroke College telling me about the program.

CG: Also I read a book written by a New York woman in the August class who said she was recruited by Virginia Gildersleeve of Barnard.

EMC: I would assume because of all the heads of women's college and in some way or another were involved in planning the WAVES. So you got this letter from your college dean.

Did you respond immediately and think it was a good idea?

CG: Yes, I did because there was a time limit.

EMC: What did you find attractive about the Navy?

CG: I was always on the water and the Navy was a natural choice.

EMC: Yes. A lot of Rhode Islanders say that, close to the water. And Newport being a Navy town. So they are more familiar with it than they would be with the Army WACS and the Coast Guard SPARS. Where did you go to enlist when you finally made your decision?

CG: 150 Causeway, Boston.

EMC: Did you have to fill out papers there?

CG: Oh, yes. We filled out papers and had a physical.

EMC: Oh, yes. You had to go through that. When did they finally notify you that you were accepted?

CG: I really don't remember. It must have been a couple of weeks before October 6<sup>th</sup>. I had to get ready to go to Northampton.

EMC: So by early October you were getting ready to go.

CG: Yes.

EMC: Right. Midshipmen school was at Smith College in Northampton. So you were in the second group that was trained. Or the first actual group of WAVES that were WAVE officers that were being trained. Because the first group, the August group, were the leaderships and teachers.

CG: Yes. I have a friend who was in the August group. But she now has Alzheimers, so I can't recommend her.

EMC: Was there any publicity about joining the WAVES in the Providence papers? Do you remember?

CG: The only publicity I remember is the picture on my file. Jan Chafee's father was connected with the Providence Journal. The picture of Jan Chafee and me was taken in Northampton for the Providence Journal.

EMC: Providence Journal. It makes sense. Get his daughter's picture in there and yours in there. Good publicity for the WAVES. How did your parents feel about you joining?

CG: They didn't object. They just let me go.

EMC: So they acquiesced. How did you get to Smith College?

CG: By car.

EMC: When you left home, did you go by yourself to Northampton?

CG: No, Professor Hunter drove his daughter Barbara, a WAVE and college classmate, and me to Northampton. That was my first trip. I remember the last trip on very cold winter night.

Jan Chafee had permission to have a car. Her brother, John, had joined the Marines and given Jan his 1935 Ford Phaeton with side curtains. Jan drove us to Smith. We froze and had to stop in Palmer for hot drinks.

EMC: How long were you in Northampton?

CG: We graduated January 11<sup>th</sup>, I believe.

EMC: Good three months or so training. When you arrived in Northampton, where were you domiciled?

CG: I was in Northrup. The Navy had taken over three Smith dormitories, Northrup, Gillette and Chapon and the Hotel Northampton. We ate in the main dining room of the hotel off aluminum trays. For breakfast, lunch and dinner we mustered in front of the dormitory and marched to the hotel.

EMC: How many to a room in that situation?

CG: There were four of us in my room with two double bunks. The single rooms had two and the double rooms had four.

EMC: Do you remember how large your class was? How many women?

CG: It was just about a thousand, I think.

EMC: That's a lot. Awful lot of women. Officer training at that particular point in time. Do you remember any of your roommates? Who they were and where they were from?

CG: I remember Tiky Alexander from Chicago. I do not remember the names of the person from Charleston, South Carolina, or Seattle, Washington.

EMC: Wow, you're the only New Englander in the group. They must have frozen in there.

CG: The freezing WAVE was Jean Winn. Jean was from Atlanta and she was in the next room. Jean would ask, "How cold is it"? So I brought a thermometer, put it outside, and one



morning it was twenty below zero. Jean came in and asked. I told her. Jean dressed over her flannel pajamas. As we were marching down the hill to breakfast the darn pajamas kept falling down. She had trouble trying to pull up her pajama legs and keep in step.

EMC: Do you remember how your day was structured at the midshipmen school?

CG: Not exactly. I know we had classes in the morning and then gym or drilling in the afternoon. One day in gym, we had an obstacle race. We had to run around the Smith gym and go over an upright piano.

EMC: A lot of physical conditioning then.

CG: Oh, yes. I was in the best shape I have ever been in my life when I left Northampton.

EMC: Oh, I'm sure.

CG: I have never been as healthy.

EMC: That bracing winter. How did you feel about the marching and mustering to classes and dining halls and the like? Did it bother you? Did you like it?

CG: No, it didn't bother me. I just figured it was part of the system.

EMC: Right. Part of the regime. Do you remember the kinds of classes you took?

CG: One was Navy regs and another was naval history. There was a typing class because we were slated for communications and we had to learn how to use an ECM (Electric Coding Machine) which had a typewriter keyboard.

EMC: Yes. Those were the kind of classes that people took there. So were you slated ahead of time for communications:

CG: As far as I know we were all assigned to communications billets.

EMC: Right. Later Mount Holyoke was the site for communications as well. Did you adjust easily to the discipline of military life?

CG: Yes. I didn't have a problem.

EMC: Did you have to endure white glove inspections?

CG: Yes, we did. I don't know how thorough they were, but we endured them.

EMC: Did you always pass?

CG: Yes, we passed.

EMC: That's good, because some of the enlisted gals tell me about their little mishaps. What was your opinion of the Navy uniform that was issued to you?

CG: I liked it.

EMC: Yes, it was sharp.

CG: And the hat.

EMC: Yes, very neat. Did you have any limited time off during these twelve weeks?

CG: Yes. I have forgotten how many. I just remember riding with three different people. So maybe it was once a month.

EMC: Could be.

CG: The Coconut Grove nightclub fire was on a weekend when we were at Smith. The recent West Warwick nightclub fire reminded me of that weekend. The senior officers were very concerned about WAVES on leave in Boston. Fortunately, no midshipman was lost in the fire.

EMC: Really? Kept track of you.

CG: Yes.

EMC: Did you ever have any social life or any activities in Northampton itself, the town.

Were you allowed to go out to the movies?

CG: I don't remember.

EMC: Did you spend your evening studying?

CG: Yes. Basically we did spend our evening studying.

EMC: And then you had lights out.

CG: Yes.

EMC: The next day the same regime. Did you have tests there?

CG: Tests?

EMC: Yes. Examinations that you had to pass for your courses.

CG: I believe so. Because another Pembroke didn't make it.

EMC: Oh, really.

CG: Yes. There were three of us in that first group.

EMC: One didn't pass her courses, I guess. So actually you had very limited time off and you were pretty much involved in your studies. Did anything amusing or noteworthy happen during this training period?

CG: I will never forget Jean Winn trying to hold up the legs of her pajamas and keep in step as we marched to breakfast one morning in 20 degrees below zero weather or the short Jeanne Sage trying to climb over the upright piano.

EMC: Did you ever have an opportunity to meet Mildred McAfee when you were at Smith?

CG: No, I didn't meet Mildred McAfee.

EMC: Captain Underwood, of course, was the Director of the School. I'm sure you at least saw him from afar.

CG: Winnie Quick is the one I remember. There was Rigby.

EMC: Oh, Eleanor Rigby.

CG: Yes, that's it. They are the two I remember at the moment.

EMC: Right they must have been instructors.

CG: They were.

EMC: So you had female instructors?

CG: Yes, we did.

EMC: Yes, because that was the first group that was trained to do that. She just wrote her reminiscences.

CG: I brought the book written about Winnie Quick's navy career.

EMC: Good.

CG: Actually I gave it to my friend who now has Alzheimer's. She was friendly with Winnie.

EMC: Yes. That was a good book. She wrote her reminiscences. She was Assistant Director of Naval Personnel, Head of the WAVES eventually. But she was in that first class. You graduated in mid January. Did you express a preference for the kind of assignment that you wanted, or did they just assign you?

CG: I think we were just assigned. I went to New York. Tikey was from Chicago and got a Midwest assignment to a base in Indiana. I can't remember where she and the other roommates went. So I think they basically assigned us close to our origins.

EMC: Right. Close to your home. They probably didn't want to pay the travel expenses.

Did you get a break before you went on your assignment? Did you get time off and go home to Providence?

CG: We must have had a few days.

EMC: Where were you assigned then? Where was your first assignment?

CG: Third Naval District. 90 Church St., New York.

EMC: What exactly were you doing there? What was your job?

CG: The Navy had several floors in the Federal building at 90 Church St. The Eastern Sea Frontier was on the fifth. The code room was in ESF. The headquarters of the Third Naval District and Radio New York were on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Radio New York sent encoded messages to be decoded to ESF via pneumatic tube and the decoded messages were sent to the 15<sup>th</sup> floor for distribution. We were responsible for distributing the dispatches to commands within COM THREE. For example all convoy routings went to the Port Director.

EMC: Did that require typing?

CG: No. The typists were in the code room. We also received encoded dispatches from BAD Washington for the Queen Mary and Elizabeth. We called the ships telling them we had the messages and they would send an officer to pick them up. On one mid watch no officer was available from the Queen Elizabeth. I said we would bring the message to the ship after 8:00 a.m. I put the dispatch in my purse and Jeanne and I took the subway to the dock. An Army officer questioned us and would not let us board until he had permission from the communication officer. The interior of the ship was stripped. We gave our message to a WREN. One of the male officers in the communication room asked "Would you like some gin". We declined.

EMC: Oh, yes, another female, British naval officer. Was there anything vital about this message?

CG: I don't know. They weren't in a particular hurry to get it, so I assume that it was a routine. I now remember, the Queens were not escorted. They had enough speed to outrun subs.

EMC: Did you have to have a secret clearance?

CG: Yes, I had secret and top secret.

EMC: Oh, you had top secret. I would think so if you were privy to these messages about the movement of ships. Convoy and troop ships. So that was basically what you did, message delivery.

CG: Yes we routed various dispatches within COM THREE. One night on the mid watch I received a dispatch from CESF to all commands from Maine to Florida reporting the escape of a German battleship and stating the possibility of attack somewhere along the East Coast. I sent it to the COM THREE duty officer asking for further routing. I neglected to notify the Brooklyn Navy Yard--a prime target. I was told of my "error" when I reported the next day.

EMC: Yes, that's nearby.

CG: The other memorable message from ESF was the sinking of the merchant ship Black Point by a sub off Point Judith a few days before VE Day. I believe the sub's propeller is on the Newport base.

EMC: Right. Like the last German sub.

CG: I received the message on an evening watch. From sailing I knew Point Judith area. Navy ships were sent from New London and Newport to find the sub. The sub was sunk after my watch.

EMC: Right they did. Jen's husband dove near there, right off Point Judith, that's where it is.

CG: Yes, it is. We were at war, not just a few weeks of fighting. How I felt was not important. We had a job to do. Merchant ships were sunk off the coast. Spies were put ashore from subs. The schooner on which I sailed was given to the Coast Guard for submarine patrol. The coast was blacked out--even trains had curtains drawn on the water side. Food and gas were rationed. Air raid sirens were installed. There were civilian air raid wardens. There were gold star mothers. It was a different era.

EMC: Can you comment on the patriotism of your era?

CG: In my opinion there was a quiet determination to defeat Japan and Germany. There was no flag waving. Flags were flown on poles where they should be. Kate Smith did sing "God Bless America". Women replaced men in the services and factories.

EMC: The populace were involved and cooperative, supportive.

CG: Yes, In addition to women in the military there was Rosie the Riveter.

EMC: Oh, yes, we had women at the torpedo station here. But it was young people in the WAVES and the rest of the military that were really shouldering the war effort. So that's basically what you did in New York. You delivered messages and took care of the message traffic that came in and disbursed it to the various places.

CG: Yes.

EMC: What kind of work schedule were you on?

CG: We were on eight to four, eight to four, eight to four, four to midnight, four to midnight, four to midnight, midnight to eight, midnight to eight, midnight to eight hours and then seventy two hours off.

EMC: So what did you do in this time frame that you were off for three days?

CG: Once Jeanne and I went skiing. I hadn't done much skiing. I was sore.

EMC: Did you socialize with WAVES during this time frame?

CG: Basically with our group.

EMC: That you worked with.

CG: Yes and roommates from other billets.

EMC: Where were you living at this point and time?

CG: In New York I lived in three different apartments.

EMC: Did you rent it?

CG: Yes.

EMC: Did you share with somebody at that point and time?

CG: I had four roommates at the Beaux Arts; two at E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street and E.54<sup>th</sup> Street.

EMC: Did you feel that you could get along with the salary that you made?

CG: Yes.

EMC: Did you get a housing allowance?

CG: Yes. I had no financial problems. I don't think the officers did.

EMC: No, they got more than the enlisted. Were you encouraged to buy war bonds during that time frame and did you?

CG: Yes, I did.

EMC: I heard all the WAVES were encouraged to buy bonds. Did you have any opportunity to socialize with any naval officers, men?

CG: Not too often. My roommates in ESF worked with men and one married her superior.

Men who were waiting for ships were assigned temporarily to COM THREE Communications.

One officer assigned to the Iowa invited Jeanne and me to tour the public areas. When

boarding I followed navy regs and saluted the Ensign (flag) and the Officer of the Deck and

requested permission to come aboard. I will never forget standing in the bow and looking at the muzzles of the 16" guns.

EMC: I guess not, because the nature of the city and its enormity. I heard that New York really opened it's doors to the WAVES and the servicemen, through canteens and free tickets.

CG: When we were living in our own apartment, we didn't go to many. I do remember going to the theater.



EMC: You didn't have the opportunity to take advantage of those things. How long were you in New York?

CG: I was transferred to Fort Lauderdale after VE Day. I was in Fort Lauderdale on VJ Day.

EMC: So you went to Florida and what was your command there?

CG: I was assigned to the U.S. Naval Ordnance Unit, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It was a very small base on the beginning of the Fort Lauderdale canal, just a short distance from the ocean. I was the communications officer. I answered the telephone, ran the switch board, and kept track of classified manuals. I was there only a few months.

EMC: What happened?

CG: The Commanding Officer and I just did not gel. I transferred to the Seventh Naval District, Miami in September 1945. The unit was experimenting with homing torpedos. The ships were: a PT, SC and submarine. I did go out on the SC and PT. I remember watching a small radar screen on the SC. The day I was with Jack on the PT I ran the boat back to Port Everglades. I was not allowed to go down in the sub because, if something happened, a WAVE should not be aboard.

EMC: Oh, yes.

CG: Another day I had to deliver classified documents from Fort Lauderdale to the headquarters of the Seventh Naval District in Miami. I drove Route 1 in an open Jeep with a forty-five strapped around me. It was my second experience being armed. The first was in New York.

EMC: Oh, you were.

CG: Yes. One day there was no available messenger or transportation to the Brooklyn Navy yard. We had a classified dispatch for the Navy yard, so I had to deliver the messages via

subway and trolley. This time I had a thirty-eight. Comments from other passenger were varied--most were about using the gun.

EMC: Did you get any training in shooting?

CG: Once. In New York.

EMC: So did you feel competent to use it?

CG: Heaven's, no.

EMC: So anyway your Florida experience in Fort Lauderdale sounds kind of interesting. You were a jack of all trades, literally.

CG: Yes.

EMC: Must have been every small office.

CG: It was a very small base.

EMC: I never heard of it.

CG: It was a secure base.

EMC: Oh, I see because of the homing torpedos.

CG: Yes.

EMC: I would imagine. From there you transferred to Miami, you said.

CG: To the Port Director's office. The picture in my file was taken in that office.

EMC: What were you doing there?

CG: It's funny I really can't remember day to day.

EMC: Were you in a communications billet again?

CG: Yes. It was communications. I know I received dispatches for information or action by the Port Director. One day I had to go with another officer to witness the burning of classified

material. The burn bags were tossed into a flaming hole on top of a large mound at the Miami dump.

EMC: Kind of like a volcano torch.

CG: I was also on duty the day the five Navy planes disappeared off the coast of Florida. A PBY was sent to search for them and it was lost. Several years ago I saw a documentary on public TV about the disappearance. The TV program was about the mysterious disappearances of ships as well as these planes within the "Bermuda Triangle".

EMC: Oh, really. A very strange occurrence.

CG: Many people connected it to the Bermuda triangle.

EMC: Do you think they got caught in the storm there maybe?

CG: No. It was a clear day. The cause is still unknown as far I know. The lead pilot must have been disoriented. What happened to the PBY?

EMC: Wasn't that something. That's a very odd occurrence.

CG: One other experience I remember is the day a German submarine came to Miami. It was one of the subs which had surrendered and was on a publicity tour. The Port Director sent his launch to meet the sub. I was aboard the launch and was allowed to come into port aboard the sub. I jumped from the launch to the rounded side of the sub--Now, an impossible leap at my age.

EMC: Right.

CG: What amazed me about the German sub was the people must have been tiny, because I was having trouble walking around. I couldn't even stretch out on a bunk, and I'm not that tall.

EMC: Yes, those World War II subs were pretty small. So you had some interesting experiences there.

CG: I did. I was on duty when odd things happened.

EMC: Where did you live in Miami? Did they provide quarters for you?

CG: When I was in Miami I lived with a family I knew from Barrington.

EMC: So you lived off base all the time?

CG: Yes, I was off base all the time.

EMC: Did you have any opportunity for social life in Florida?

CG: Yes.

EMC: What kinds of things did you do?

CG: I remember one new Year's Eve at the Orange Bowl Parade. We were sitting at a table overlooking the boulevard. An officer sat down at the piano and played "We Are Ever True to Brown." I introduced myself and we sang. I also got permission from Washington to fly to Nassau with friends. One Sunday a Coast Guard officer invited me and some friends to go sailing. He had just acquired a cruising sloop. After leaving port I realized he knew little about sailing. We left Miami, got caught in the Gulf Stream and were carried north. When we approached shore we were off Hollywood. Due to the wind direction sailing south to Miami was not feasible. He dropped sails and started the engine which did not have power to buck the waves. We just rocked with the waves with no forward movement. I don't know why, but I grabbed the wheel and sailed north with bare poles into Port Everglades.

EMC: Lucky you got back. Do you remember where you were when VJ Day occurred?

CG: I was in Fort Lauderdale.

EMC: Do you remember the reaction of the base and your own reaction to that event?

CG: Jack the skipper of the PT drove the boat through the Fort Lauderdale canals, causing much wake. The atomic bombs troubled me--the splitting of atoms and destruction.

EMC: The fact that they were used.

CG: Yes, used, and the danger of a chain reaction.

EMC: Were you glad the war was over?

CG: Yes. I think everybody was.

EMC: Did you celebrate in any particular way with your group?

CG: I am not sure. I know I went to the Officers Club in Port Everglades with a group and remember a party given by the Chief Petty Officer and his wife. The latter may have been a VJ celebration.

EMC: Anyway, the war was over and you still continued serving in the Navy. How long did you stay in the Miami office?

CG: From September '45 to June '46 and I was transferred to New Orleans.

EMC: So you stayed there eight months. What did you do in New Orleans?

CG: I tracked ships within the Gulf of Mexico.

EMC: Did you request that transfer?

CG: No. I was transferred to New Orleans because of reorganizatin of the area. The office of Port Director was eliminated and the Headquarters of the Gulf Sea Frontier was changed from Miami to New Orleans. I had requested duty in Hawaii, not New Orleans.

EMC: Why did you want to go to Hawaii?

CG: Now I do not remember the reason.

EMC: What kind of things were you doing in New Orleans? Was it similar?

CG: I was in the Movement Report Office tracking naval ships returning from the Pacific via the Panama Canal to New Orleans. We estimated arrival time by the speed and time sent by dispatches from the ships. Messages were no longer classified. One day three LST's did not

arrive on time. The ships did not reply to radio messages requesting their position. The Commander of the Gulf Sea Frontier sent planes from Pensacola and Corpus Christi to search for the ships. The search was in the paper. Our Duty Officer received a call from a father of one of the crew. His son had telephoned and said they had stopped in Jamaica.

EMC: Oh, they just stopped there for a little R and R.

CG: Yes. I do not know what happened to the men.

EMC: What did you like about your communications assignments?

CG: My assignments were varied. Actually, some occurrences were very interesting. In general, I just did what I had to do.

EMC: The routine and not complaining about it. Did you feel any pressures in any of these billets?

CG: Yes. I did not get along with the commander of the base in Fort Lauderdale.

EMC: So that was a little conflict. But how were you treated in your other assignments by your male counterparts or supervisors?

CG: I had no problems.

EMC: So there was no harassment or discrimination?

CG: No.

EMC: Well, that's good. Did you have any contacts with any civilians during this time frame, either in the work force or on the outside and how did they react to the WAVES? Either in the office or the outside world.

CG: The civilians I worked with and knew accepted me as a WAVE. We were at war.

EMC: Did you write to your parents or friends about your WAVE experiences during the war?

CG: No, I didn't do too much writing. I did telephone.

EMC: Because it would be great to have your letters. Did you keep up with news about the war during your service? Did you watch the newsreels, go to the movies, listen to the radio?

CG: I knew more about a segment of the war than the civilians. Occasionally, I listened to the radio and went to the movies.

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

CG: I think I met her somewhere, but I can't recall where. I had known her as President of Wellesley before she became head of the WAVES.

EMC: What was the highest rank that you achieved?

CG: Lieutenant Senior.

EMC: Grade?

CG: Yes.

EMC: That's quite a high rank for those days in that time frame, because there were limitations on the WAVES ranks. So you really progressed.

CG: A few of us were promoted to Lieutenant Commander.

EMC: Which is very good. When were you finally discharged from the Navy?

CG: I think it's April '47.

EMC: So you had stayed on a couple of years longer than most. Did you spend the last year in New Orleans?

CG: Yes.

EMC: So you never got to Hawaii?

CG: No. I went to Pensacola to get discharged.

EMC: Were you glad to have stayed in the Navy a couple of years beyond the war?

CG: I'm very glad I served.

EMC: And that you continued on even a couple of years after.

CG: Yes.

EMC: You were in the active reserve?

CG: Yes. I was active for several years. I attended drills in Providence. In 1948, I spent two weeks in communications at the Potomac River Naval Command and in 1949 two weeks at the Naval Air Station, Quonset.

EMC: In the reserves for a while. Do you remember when you left the active reserves in the Navy? Was it in the fifties sometime?

CG: I became inactive December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1950 when the Providence unit was disestablished. In September 1955, I received "Tentative Assignment to Active Duty in the Event of Total Mobilization". If called I was to report in three days to the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington via the Naval Receiving Station, Boston. I was traveling and knew I could not comply, so I resigned effective January 3, 1956.

EMC: How did you feel about leaving the Navy in 1947? Were you happy sad, mixed emotions ever?

CG: I was relieved and sad.

EMC: Would you have stayed on if you had gotten Hawaii?

CG: I truly do not remember what I would have done.

EMC: What did you do when you left the Navy in 47? What type of work did you get involved in?

CG: I went back to the college in '48. I became an Admissions Officer.

EMC: At Pembroke?

CG: Yes.



EMC: Good. Must have been a fun job. Well, a little bit back, to wrap up about the WAVES.

Did you receive any medals?

CG: As far as I know I have one ribbon.

EMC: Most of the WAVES got something. A Victory Medal or American Campaign Medal, or something. Do you feel that the WAVES had a strong sense of esprit de corps when you were in?

CG: There was a esprit de corps at Smith. However, after graduation I was with small groups and cannot answer for a large command.

EMC: Just your office mates. Did you have any preconceived expectations when you entered the WAVES or what it would be like?

CG: No.

EMC: Did you think that in your early training at Smith that it was a smoothly run organization or you were part of a pilot group?

CG: I think the instructors were about one page ahead of us.

EMC: Being the first group. Was anybody that you worked with or went to training with dismissed for disciplinary reasons?

CG: No.

EMC: Did the war make you more independent and self reliant? Do you think it had an effect on you?

CG: Yes.

EMC: How did it make you more independent and self reliant?

CG: My memory is not too good, but I know I was more independent.

CG: Yes. When I was in the admission office, I organized all my school trips--appointments, travel and hotels. Except for driving from Maine to Washington, D.C., all travel was by train. I became very good at reading time tables!

EMC: Well, yes, making your own arrangements. Did you like meeting women from all over the country, because you certainly did?

CG: Sure.

EMC: Widening your horizons. Did you maintain any service friendships when the war was over?:

CG: Yes. Unfortunately several have died. Jeanne one of my New York roommates recently telephoned me from her home in California.

EMC: Do you belong to any WAVE organizations?

CG: No.

EMC: There is WAVES NATIONAL. Are you aware of WIMSA? Women in Military Service for America. It's in Arlington, Virginia and it's a museum of women in the military. They also have a database for everybody who served and an archive.

CG: I misunderstood your question. I sent information about my service to the Memorial as well as a contribution in memory of Mildred McAfee.

EMC: Good, then you're a member. Finally, to wrap up, what was the significance of your naval service for you and your life? How would you sum it up? What was its meaning for you?

CG: I am proud I served my country in a time of very great need.

EMC: Well, that's great. Do you have anything else to add? Anything that we missed? Any experience? Any reminiscence of an individual or event?

CG: When I was active for two weeks in Washington, I inspected the communications aboard the presidential yacht. When at Quonset a WAVE officer stationed at the Air Station arranged a flight to Norfolk for a small group to have dinner with her brother aboard a destroyer. On return we were unable to land because of fog. We landed at Weymouth and were bussed back to Quonset. I also remember crossing Narragansett Bay by in a high speed naval launch to deliver dispatches to the Newport Base.

EMC: Was Mary Maguire in your group in New York? Because she was there. She was at the Eastern Sea Frontier.

CG: I did not see Mary in New York. There was a larger group of WAVES at ESF than COM THREE. I did not have two roommates attached to ESF when I lived on E. 12<sup>th</sup> St.

EMC: I want to thank you very much for coming in, Celeste, and sharing your memories of your WAVES service with us. We will have this transcribed and do some editing. Thank you very much.

CG: You're very welcome.