

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NEWPORT, RI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

HISTORY OF LIFE IN WORLD WAR II

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NO. 310

JOAN L. CRUMP HANLON

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

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NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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INTERVIEWEE: JOAN L. CRUMP HANLON

INTERVIEWER: DR. EVELYN M. CHERPAK

SUBJECT: THE HISTORY OF LIFE IN WORLD WAR II

DATE: NOVEMBER 5, 2003

EMC: This is the first oral history with Joan Hanlon. Today's date is November 5, 2003. The interview is taking place at her home on Hoyt Avenue in Rumford, Rhode Island. My name is Evelyn Cherpak. I'm the curator of the Naval Historical Collection at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Joan, I'm so pleased that you're free today to give us some of your memories of being a civilian worker for the Navy at the Bayonne Naval Base in New Jersey during World War II. I'd like to begin the interview by asking you where and when you were born.

JCH: I was born in Cranford, New Jersey, on June 4, 1922.

EMC: Did you spend your growing-up years in Cranford?

JCH: Yes. My family spent all their married life in Cranford.

EMC: Did you go to high school there?

JCH: No.

EMC: Where did you go?

JCH: I went to Kent Place in Summit, New Jersey.

EMC: That's a private school for girls.

JCH: A private school for girls, yes.

EMC: That's pretty well known. What did your father do for a living?

JCH: My father was an artist.

EMC: How interesting!

JCH: My mother was a portrait painter.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes!

JCH: And I'm a portrait painter.

EMC: Oh, great!

JCH: We're all painters.

EMC: Oh, that's amazing. Did your father make his livelihood doing this?

JCH: Yes, he did, and a very good one.

EMC: Now what kind of pictures did he paint?

JCH: He was an advertising artist, and he worked for--he did illustrations for Dodd Mead in the beginning, Dodd Mead Publishing Company. Then he worked for Con Edison in their advertising department. This was long before they used photographs for everything, for all their commercials. You drew pictures.

EMC: Oh, how interesting! You have some of that talent, too, as well.

JCH: We had to. We spent our lives in a studio. You couldn't miss it.

EMC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

JCH: Yes, I have a brother.

EMC: You mentioned that he taught English at Kenyon.

JCH: Yes. He was in the English Department, and he was the editor of the Kenyon Review.

EMC: A very famous literary magazine that's still going strong, I presume.

JCH: Oh, yes.

EMC: Well, when did you graduate from high school?

JCH: Oh, I think it would be '40.

EMC: What did you decide to do after high school? Did you have any plans for college or work?

JCH: Nothing. Just have a good time. We girls didn't have any plans for anything. Nobody did. We all just were very sort of flitting around and having fun. Nobody wanted to be any particular thing. But our families were determined that we would go to college, and we did.

EMC: Where did you go?

JCH: I went to Marot Junior College.

EMC: Can you spell that for me?

JCH: M-A-R-O-T. In Thompson, Connecticut.

EMC: Where is Thompson, Connecticut?

JCH: Next to Putnam.

EMC: Oh, way out in the country.

JCH: That's right. Oh, yes, it's Thompson's Speedway place now.
The big Thompson's Speedway.

EMC: Oh, I see. Well, that's kind of interesting.

JCH: It was just a darling little town, mostly the college.

EMC: Right, right. Was it a very large school?

JCH: There were about 200 girls.

EMC: It was a junior college.

JCH: A junior college. That was what everybody did in those days. You went to junior college. Then if you had found something that you were really interested in, by that time you'd grown up enough so they then said, all right, well, go to Wellesley, or go

to you know.

EMC: Wherever.

JCH: Yes, transfer over.

EMC: Well, you didn't really major in anything there.

JCH: Well, I did. That isn't true. I did. It was mostly child psychology. That was their big thing. So when I got out of there, I was equipped to teach nursery school and kindergarten.

EMC: Oh, I see. Okay. When did you graduate?

JCH: Nineteen forty-two.

EMC: Now you were in school presumably when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

JCH: Right.

EMC: Do you remember where you were and your reaction?

JCH: I'm glad you asked that because nobody ever is aware of that. Marot College was very popular with Navy people. The Navy people that were stationed in Pearl Harbor and that whole area,

they all were--well, it was Commander Short, wasn't it? I'm not sure of the names. But they were all higher officers in the Navy at that time because the Navy wasn't very big in 1942. They sent their daughters to Marot. So there were at least five.

EMC: Navy juniors they call them.

JCH: Navy juniors.

EMC: I think Army brats.

JCH: They may have been brats. They were all friends of mine.

EMC: Navy juniors, right.

JCH: Navy juniors. So the big problem was that they were all sent there together because their fathers were all big Navy admirals. That Sunday the headmistress of the school heard, I guess, before anybody else. None of us had any radios or anything. That wasn't the time when you did. She heard, and she knew that those girls were going to be desperate about their families over there and their fathers. So there was a big thing, and we were all called together, and everybody was told. It was very traumatic for those girls.

EMC: Oh, I bet.

JCH: Because of their families.

EMC: Yes, they didn't know what happened to them.

JCH: No, and didn't know for a long time.

EMC: Now, what was your personal reaction? Did you feel shock or surprise and dismay?

JCH: Didn't understand it. I mean dismayed, shocked, of course. People killed and all that. But none of us at eighteen were aware of what war could be. We didn't have any idea. I mean that meant we went to war. So, well, what does that mean? Well, none of us knew.

EMC: Right, right.

JCH: None of the whole country knew what that meant actually. We really didn't have any understanding.

EMC: Of what was in store obviously.

JCH: No, we didn't know what war meant.

EMC: Well, you graduated in June, I presume, of '42.

JCH: Yes.

EMC: Six months after Pearl Harbor. Did you have any plans for employment after you left Marot?

JCH: No. I probably figured that I'd end up teaching in some private nursery school. That's what most of the girls were doing. Half-a-day work or something like that.

EMC: Right, right. Did you go back to New Jersey?

JCH: Yes, when I graduated, sure.

EMC: You went back to your parents' home.

JCH: Yes. But that summer my best friend's father, who was my father's best friend, was taken back in the Marines as a major, and he was stationed in Washington. So his family all moved to Washington at that time. She was down there, and we were best friends, and I wasn't doing anything. So we said, all right, let's see what's going on in Washington. So I stayed with her for about two months in the summer. I wasn't really doing anything.

EMC: Just having fun.

JCH: Oh, sure, we were having a great time.

EMC: Visiting, whatever.

JCH: With her father then in the Marines, we were introduced to a million different Marines, which we thought was fun.

EMC: Oh, I bet!

JCH: In uniform, oh, wow!

EMC: Yes, that's very impressive.

JCH: We hadn't seen too many uniforms before.

EMC: Well, that's very impressive at that age.

JCH: Yes, it was. Of course it was.

EMC: Did you have a lot of parties and social events?

JCH: Yes. There were a lot of social events that were put on by the Junior League and, you know, all that kind of thing, and were entertaining the soldiers.

EMC: Right. Well, when did you finally seek full-time

employment?

JCH: My family said they thought it was time I came home. It had gotten to about the end of August, and I think we decided, all right, I'd better come home and see what I was going to do. In the meantime, the Bayonne Naval Base had been built up, preparing for war. They all knew, preparing for this. In our little town of Cranford, which was maybe, oh, I don't know, maybe three quarters of an hour away by train, a lot of the naval officers that had been assigned to build up this big base brought their families, and they all rented houses in Cranford. The admiral of the base, Admiral Stanley, lived just maybe four doors away from us, rented a house about four doors away from us, my family's house.

Of course everybody took them all in, all the naval officers and all that. There were many cocktail parties at that time. I guess at one of the parties or something, I think my father said something to Admiral Stanley, "Well, are you going to employ any people over there? I've got a daughter, and I've got to get her out. She's got to go to work. I can't have her not doing something for the war." He said, "Oh, sure, send her over."

So I was still in Washington having fun, and my father and mother called me up and said, "Joan, come home now. Admiral Stanley wants to give you a job." All right. Me and 500 other people. But it was only because they were so close; they were just neighbors. So there was great chatting going on all the time.

EMC: Oh, that's great.

JCH: So I said, "All right. I'll come home in a few days." And I came home in a few days. They said, "Put on your bonnet and shoes and go over there, go over to the naval base and get a job." I said, "Okay. All right." I don't mind. Naval base, sounds good to me. So I went over and joined the civil service.

EMC: Did you have to take a test, do you remember?

JCH: I don't remember. We had to pass all sorts of FBI stuff.

EMC: Oh, fingerprinting and all that?

JCH: Yes, all of that. It took a few days to do. They were very careful who they took in as far as that part of it, you know.

EMC: Yes. So you had to fill out applications and....

JCH: Yes, sure. I don't remember taking a test. That's how I ended up at the naval base in Bayonne.

EMC: Yes. That's kind of an interesting story. So though your neighbor who was head of it, the admiral. Well, before we get into just what you did, did you ever consider joining the WAVES?

JCH: No. I've always been a free spirit. I never had any interest in anybody telling me what to wear, what to do, when to go to bed, and where to live. I was on my own.

EMC: Well, when you finally went through the application process at Bayonne, where were you assigned to work?

JCH: Well, there was a big office building that they had. I think it was new, too, a big office building, and I think we were on the ninth floor where all the offices were. Most of it was just big warehouses where they were keeping all the materials, all the stuff they were buying. Because I guess it was the major. We were on the ninth floor. That's where all the officers pretty much were, at desks. It was a huge, huge expanse. One floor. It had a big counter that ran all around, and we were all in the center of the counter. Everybody that came to visit or came from other boats or ships or anything had to walk around the outside of the counter and identify themselves before they could get in.

EMC: What was your job there?

JCH: My job was in the mail room at that point. When I first went, I routed mail.

EMC: Oh, yes. Do you remember what your classification was?

JCH: CAF-1, \$18.50 a week.

EMC: Wow! Did you like this position?

JCH: I didn't care. I knew I had to work someplace in the war, and I had to do something for the war.

EMC: So did you carry the mail to other offices?

JCH: There were no offices. The admiral had an office at one end with his secretary. The rest were all around inside this big place. They were all open. Everything was open.

EMC: Oh, I see.

JCH: Wide open. You could see all the way across.

EMC: Was the mail room in that area?

JCH: Yes, the mail room was in one of those areas over in the counter. I read the mail and stuck them in boxes where it went to receiving or supply or dry provisions or wet provisions or whatever the letters were. I just stuck them in slots.

EMC: Oh, I see. I see. Did you work with a group of people there

in the mail room?

JCH: Yes, there were about five in the civil service, mostly kids who hadn't been drafted yet.

EMC: Oh, boys?

JCH: Yes.

EMC: Oh, young boys.

JCH: Sixteen, waiting to go.

EMC: Oh, I see. Any other women, any other girls?

JCH: Not in the mail room. I was the only one.

EMC: You were the only one. Did you like it?

JCH: Well, I was only there about six weeks.

EMC: Oh, I see. Oh, so this was short term.

JCH: That was the first thing that they gave me until they decided what they wanted to do with me.

EMC: Oh, I see.

JCH: Nobody knew quite what they wanted to do with me because word had gotten around that Admiral Stanley had sent her over. You know how that is.

EMC: So, yes, you were just waiting in limbo for something better.

JCH: Sure. But since I couldn't type and I couldn't take shorthand, what could you do with me? After that they moved me to CAF-2, which was \$22.50 a week. This was standard pay for then.

EMC: Right, for civil servants.

JCH: They put me in a thing called Follow-up, and there were about, oh, maybe three girls. We each had a desk. What we did was when the contracts for whatever they were buying were made--and there were huge files of all these contracts--as the contracts were coming due, we followed up that they got in on time. We telephoned or we wrote. We did the work to see that it got in on time because you can't hold a ship up.

EMC: Oh, right. Now, did you have ships at Bayonne?

JCH: Oh, sure, we had a huge dry dock. Bayonne's right on the

river, right on the Hudson. Oh, yes, we had Chinese loaders and coolie loaders and boats came in, ships, boats. Small boats, big ships. Dry dock, we always had something in the dry dock.

EMC: Oh, absolutely. You were a supply base, weren't you?

JCH: Supply for North Atlantic.

EMC: Oh, so you had to send out, in other words, materials and contracts were sent out for ships in the North Atlantic or provisions?

JCH: No, provisions to be brought in for ships that were coming to be sent out across the Atlantic.

EMC: Oh, okay. So you were provisioning ships that were going out into the Atlantic Theater. So that would be everything.

JCH: Yes, it was. But we were bigger than Quonset. I mean this was a big place where everything was loaded and kept.

EMC: It must have been a huge base then.

JCH: Huge!

EMC: Do you have any idea how many people worked there? How many

civilians?

JCH: I really don't. I don't because I know there were about a hundred of us girls on the ninth floor. But there were a lot of other people that were sorting things on the eighth floor, and, you know.

EMC: Oh, yes, in the office building and then people out on the docks and whatever.

JCH: Right.

EMC: So it was huge.

JCH: It was huge and huge warehouses. Huge warehouses.

EMC: Must have been. Well, you were in the Follow-up Division, you said.

JCH: FO, Follow-up Division.

EMC: Did you like your work there? What did you think of it?

JCH: It was just routine. You just got a pile of folders this high for material that was supposed to be coming in that week. You just called up--mostly telephoned--called up all over the

United States and said, "Gillette Razors, are your razors going to be in on time? And if they're not, you'd better tell us so that we can make other arrangements."

EMC: Oh, I see. So you did a lot of telephoning work.

JCH: It was mostly telephone.

EMC: Checking on the contracts and whether they were going to come in.

JCH: On time. They were all going to come in because they were already paid. But, as we constantly had to explain to everybody, the ship is leaving. The ship has orders. It's either got to be there, or we've got to substitute.

EMC: What would you do if you had to substitute?

JCH: I don't know. That was all handled, all the buying was handled by the officers.

EMC: Oh, so that was different--somebody else's responsibility.

JCH: The officers wrote all the contracts, sent out all the stuff. All we did was once it was a final contract, then we just saw that it got in on time.

EMC: Oh, okay. Well, you worked, as you say, with about a hundred girls on that floor.

JCH: Yes, oh, yes. Easily. Every officer had a secretary, and there might have been 40, 45, 50 officers on that floor.

EMC: Oh, I see.

JCH: They all had their secretaries that were all civil service.

EMC: Did you make friends with any of these women?

JCH: Oh, sure, we had great friends. We went out every night.

EMC: Oh, you did?

JCH: Oh, sure.

EMC: Where did you go, and what did you do?

JCH: Well, we would go out afterwards and have a drink on the way home. Or we'd go out with some ensign that was kicking around waiting for his ship to leave and wanted to go to New York. He'd come up and say, "Any of you girls want to go to New York?" Because most of them were from out west and other places and

didn't know New York and were scared. And we were all New York oriented.

EMC: Yes, you lived near enough.

JCH: We'd say, "Sure, we'll take you!" They had the money. They wanted the tour. So we'd go into New York and....

EMC: How did you get there? Now did you have to take a train?

JCH: We took trains for everything.

EMC: What did you do when you went to New York with these young men?

JCH: Drank.

EMC: Oh, really?

JCH: Sure. Probably. Mostly. Ate and drank.

EMC: Yes, I just wondered if you went to plays or USO's?

JCH: No, they didn't want USO's, and they didn't want.... No, we'd go to.... I can't believe. I think I'm thinking wrong. But there was a club called the German-American Club, and I can't

believe it was still there. It was the same club, but I can't believe it was called that. It was a popular hangout for all the Navy men that were the thirty-day wonders up at Columbia. We knew a lot of them, mainly because I had a cousin who was there from Milwaukee. So that was a big popular place. Pennsylvania 65000. That was another big popular place. Any place where you could dance.

EMC: Oh, I see.

JCH: Any hotel where there was an orchestra and you could dance.

EMC: Oh. Oh, that's great.

JCH: Wonderful time.

EMC: How did your parents feel about your going out on the town all the time? Did they ever say anything?

JCH: No, and it wasn't all the time. But it seemed like it, you know. I'm a working woman making my own money. They couldn't say anything.

EMC: Right. All of probably twenty.

JCH: We had very limited time because there were only so many

trains that ran. If you didn't get to the 10:20 to Cranford....

EMC: You didn't get to Cranford, yes.

JCH: You didn't get to Cranford. Believe me, you didn't do that. You got to Cranford. You got home.

EMC: Was there a feeling of camaraderie among the workers that you worked with?

JCH: Yes, the ones that were around me, we were all friends. We commuted every day on the train.

EMC: Did you enjoy that?

JCH: Oh, that was sort of a pain in the neck. My house was about a mile and a quarter from the train station. There were no cars. You couldn't drive. They had no gas.

EMC: The rationing.

JCH: Rationing. So I had to walk a mile and a quarter down to the train station. I caught a 7:20 train. It was Jersey Central. It stopped at every little town. About half the people were working at the naval base, the girls. So we'd all meet on the train. Everybody'd hold seats for everybody. We were all pals.

The train left at 7;20 and got into Bayonne about ten minutes past eight, 8:15, somewhere around. I don't remember. But it was early. Then we went through the Marine base, the outside Marine guard. Then we took a bus into the inner Marine guard. There was a whole regiment of guards there that lived there, of Marines that lived there.

EMC: Oh. Sure.

JCH: All of this, mind you, was done in darkness because it was wartime. I left the house at six in the morning, stars out, moon out. Came home at night at 7:15, 7:30. Stars out, moon out. All we ever really wanted to do was to spend one day, and we prayed that Sunday we'd have sun because we never saw daylight.

EMC: Right. Oh, yes. You were inside.

JCH: It was always dark all the time.

EMC: Yes, that's kind of hard. Well, that was difficult, And, of course, you had blackouts then, too.

JCH: Well, New York was all brown out, so that was another reason that we never went to New York without several officers, several ensigns, and a couple of other girls. We were always together. We never did anything separate because wherever the

ensigns lived, I never knew where--they all lived in various places--they would put us on a subway to home, down to Chambers Street in New York, which is still not the best part of New York. That was all blacked out, and you had to walk two blocks and then across Chambers to get the ferry that took you across the Hudson to get to the train.

EMC: Right.

JCH: Those two blocks down were nothing but barrooms on both sides. You didn't do any of that alone because it was blacked out. It was scary, and that's why we were all pretty well taken care of.

EMC: Right. You had to go in groups.

JCH: Because it was scary. Right.

EMC: That's quite something. Well, I guess there were blackouts, too, periodically in your town, weren't there, in Cranford?

JCH: Oh, yes. They periodically had them. My father was an air raid warden, do I remember him going out in the evening. Yes, I do remember them.

EMC: Yes, they did have them occasionally.

JCH: Shades you'd pull down.

EMC: Yes, black shades, and you'd have to put all your lights out. Well, it sounds like your job was kind of busy.

JCH: Well, you worked. You sat there at your desk and just went through. The woman who was head of Follow-up, her name was Mrs. Pishotto. I can still remember her. She would see that each desk in the morning was loaded with the contracts, and you just sat there 'til you did them.

EMC: Right, right. Did you ever have any contact with any of the WAVES at Bayonne?

JCH: Truthfully, I never saw more than four. There may have been WAVES around in other buildings in the supply buildings or something. I don't know. I never saw anything or had anything to do with any of them.

EMC: Oh, I see. But they were there, at least these four were there.

JCH: I never could see what they were doing. They were usually sitting talking to an officer.

EMC: Oh, I see. Well, it seems like your office was a stable of women with a woman supervisor.

JCH: Well, each little section of this huge room--and then I say huge, from here to Wanamosett. It was that big a place. Each little separate section--one was a receiving section--and they had an officer, usually a lieutenant commander or commander, his secretary, and one of the heads of the civil service, a woman; usually it was a woman. And there were fifteen or twenty of those sections just stuck around. Mine happened to be follow-up section. There was a Commander Brody who was our commander.

EMC: Did you experience any discrimination or harassment in your office?

JCH: No, never. Never. Nobody ever heard of anything like that.

EMC: Right. Those words weren't even known in those days. That's true. Well, I wanted to ask you what else you did socially. You mentioned that you went to New York occasionally with these ensigns during the week, I presume, after work.

JCH: Yes. Usually you'd go in and get some supper someplace. The Biltmore was another place we went to a lot.

EMC: What did you do on weekends?

JCH: Well, I worked all day Saturday.

EMC: Oh, so you had to work Saturdays.

JCH: It was six days.

EMC: Oh, it was six days a week.

JCH: Yes.

EMC: Was it eight hours a day?

JCH: Eight hours a day.

EMC: Oh, so you had hardly any time off.

JCH: That's why I say, if it weren't for Sunday, it was the only time we'd ever see any sun.

EMC: Oh, dear.

JCH: Daylight, that was the only time.

EMC: Oh, wow! So you were kept extremely busy.

JCH: Well, it was a way of life. You got up at five-thirty, and you caught the train, and you came home at seven-thirty, and you took your bath and ate your dinner, and went to bed.

EMC: Right. That's about it.

JCH: Yes, really, it was. They were long.

EMC: They were long days and six days a week.

JCH: But our fun was all there together. We could chatter chat, you know.

EMC: Did you follow up with news of the war during this time period?

JCH: Oh, yes. You'd read the paper every morning. Yes, sure.

EMC: I wondered if you did. Did you ever go to the movies during this time?

JCH: Not very often because we didn't have any time. Sometimes on Sunday I'd go. But I'm trying to think.

EMC: Because movies really proliferated then. There were many of them, war movies and....

JCH: Oh, yes.

EMC: Just generally it was a very popular form of entertainment.

JCH: Right. I don't remember movies per se because we'd get home so late. Now sometimes, yes. Sometimes we'd catch an eight o'clock or eight-thirty movie.

EMC: Of course there wasn't TV then.

JCH: No, no, no. There might have been some TV in bars.

EMC: Oh, really?

JCH: There might have been. Or that might have been just after the war. I'm not sure.

EMC: Probably after. But anyway, did you listen to the radio?

JCH: Oh, constantly. That's one thing you did do.

EMC: Yes, you listened to radio more.

JCH: Everybody cuddled up to a radio that was right in the kitchen usually.

EMC: Yes. That's for sure. Did you engage in any sports at all?

JCH: When?

EMC: On your one day off.

JCH: No.

EMC: Okay. So you weren't into sports.

JCH: Well, there weren't any sports. What were we going to do?

EMC: Play tennis or swim?

JCH: Nine o'clock at night?

EMC: No. I mean on Sundays.

JCH: No, no. A whole bunch of us would get together. To tell you the truth, what we did on Sundays, I had a huge circle of girlfriends in Cranford that I was born and brought up with, and we were all without men. There were no men around. So we decided that on Sunday after church--we all went to church--we decided at that point that this was stupid. All we did was work. We never got dressed up. We never had anything really to do, except for

the few times when we'd go to New York with a couple of friends. But that was, as I say, always with a group. That we would have sherry parties. After church, before lunch or before Sunday dinner. It would change from house to house to house each Sunday. One Sunday it would be mine, one at Elsie's, one at Evelyn's, and so on. And we had a sherry party. There would be twenty-five or thirty of us girls. We could dress to the nines. Just so we'd wear some clothes for a change.

EMC: Sure. Dress-up clothes.

JCH: Dress-up clothes and admire each other. "Oh, doesn't that look nice." "Oh, wonderful!" And we had our sherry parties.

EMC: How nice! Well, that's kind of an elegant, interesting thing to do.

JCH: That's what we did all through the war, we had our sherry parties. There were a lot of Australians who came through that were stationed in New York. They were sent to New York, and then they'd be shipped over. For some unknown reason, I don't know how or why, but they got onto Cranford, and Cranford people, my family, all these girls' families, took them in, and they stayed with us for, oh, two or three weeks at a time.

EMC: Oh, that's interesting. Servicemen?

JCH: Servicemen. Flyers usually, Air Force.

EMC: Oh, that's kind of interesting. I didn't know that.

JCH: Also, one of the girls married one of them.

EMC: Oh, I bet!

JCH: After the war they went back and married. Oh, I heard right up until, oh, maybe ten years ago from several of them.

EMC: Oh, that's amazing.

JCH: Yes. And Cranford seemed to be the place. I don't know who started it. Some organization started the whole thing.

EMC: Oh, probably, to make the contact.

JCH: Yes.

EMC: That was kind of interesting. Did your family have anybody stay with you?

JCH: Oh, sure. We had several people many times. I remember we had--there were three or four boys that were there over Christmas

and we had Christmas dinner. Their faces just fell, and I remember my mother being so unhappy about it, because roast beef was the Christmas dinner you had in America, and lamb was what you had in Australia. They sat down happily to a big Christmas dinner, and their faces were all no lamb? We're not going to have lamb? It broke mother's heart. She said, "Oh, dear, if I'd only known."

EMC: They were lucky to get roast beef.

JCH: Yes, well, you saved up all your coupons.

EMC: Yes, your coupons. Oh, wasn't that something! Well, that's kind of unusual, the fact that you took in Australians.

JCH: So they would relieve our sherry parties from time to time. I mean they'd come to the parties, maybe three or four men all being absolutely besieged by us twenty women, twenty-five women.

EMC: Did your family ever raise a Victory Garden?

JCH: No.

EMC: Oh, they didn't. No garden.

JCH: They never had a garden.

EMC: Can you comment on family life then during the wartime period? Women tended to stay at home, didn't they?

JCH: Well, see, Mother was a portrait painter. My mother and father had a studio.

EMC: In the house?

JCH: No, out in the town.

EMC: Oh, I see. So she was a working woman.

JCH: So she was one of the first working women.

EMC: Oh, how interesting.

JCH: But we always had servants. I mean we were, I hesitate to say, but of the wealthier groups, and we always had a maid in the kitchen and a housemaid, you know, to do the housekeeping.

EMC: Oh, I see. Okay.

JCH: I mean I don't say wealthy. I don't meant it that way.

EMC: You had help.

JCH: So I was never alone. My brother was always a baby and around.

EMC: Were they live-in?

JCH: Oh, yes.

EMC: Live-in help, okay.

JCH: But during the middle of the war, when it really got going, the cook decided she could make a lot more money in a factory. So she left to go to a factory. She was Haitian, and she left to go to a factory. I was thrilled because I hated her. She was mean, Haitian, you know, black, mean. The housekeeper always stayed. But she married during the war, so she went off and lived at home at night. But she always came back every day. She was just a member of the family. You talk about any discrimination or anything, Bertha was black, but she was like a mother. Bertha was part of our family. She was black, couldn't write, couldn't read, do anything. And nobody ever thought anything about it. I'm always shocked when I find discrimination. But at any rate, she stayed, and she was with Mother right up until Mother died at 94.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes!

JCH: She went with Mother the week after she came home from her honeymoon. So she was always with us.

EMC: Oh, that's a long time, isn't it?

JCH: Bertha was just another member of the family. So she stayed.

EMC: Oh, that's good. That's very interesting. A good comment on family life.

JCH: And then, oh, I forgot the question. Then Mother had to take over the cooking.

EMC: Oh, boy!

JCH: So that calmed her down on doing portraits because she had to be home then because somebody had to do the dinner. Bertha, though still there, also had several children of her own by that time. So she was divided between both houses, her own and.... So, yes, Mother found out she was a great cook.

EMC: Oh, that's good.

JCH: I was always sort of shocked.

EMC: And developed her talents.

JCH: My father and my brother was in boys' school at that point. He was away in a boys' school, private school. So my father and my mother and I would sit in the kitchen, which we'd never done before, we would sit in the kitchen while Mother cooked. We'd have a drink and sit there and just discuss the day and it was great. Listen to the news.

EMC: Oh, that's good. Did you ever take family vacations during this time?

JCH: Oh, sure. We had a house in New York State. So we went up there. We rented a house, but it was always done. Every summer it was always ours. So we went to New York State.

EMC: Oh, that's good.

JCH: A couple of months, two months.

EMC: But you couldn't do that when you were working at Bayonne.

JCH: No, no, no. I couldn't.

EMC: You had limited vacation time.

JCH: I think that we limited them. We had maybe two weeks. I think Mother and Dad only went up for two weeks then. That I'm sort of hazy about.

EMC: Yes, because they wouldn't give you much time off.

JCH: I had a couple of weeks.

EMC: So we've discussed family life.

JCH: Well, I remember stepping on cans.

EMC: Oh, yes. Tin cans? No, I didn't do that. I was born in World War II, but I was an infant. So I don't remember stepping on them.

JCH: When were you born?

EMC: Nineteen forty-one.

JCH: Oh, well, for goodness sakes.

EMC: But I do remember, you know, I remember the blackouts. I remember the blackouts.

JCH: I was nineteen. You remember the blackouts?

EMC: Yes.

JCH: You couldn't have been more than three or four.

EMC: Right. But it impressed me greatly, pulling down the shades, the black shades.

JCH: Oh, yes, you did. Well, we always had to take off both ends of the cans and step on them. That was very important. Family life. You didn't have any--very few shoes because shoes were rationed.

EMC: Leather, yes.

JCH: Yes, it was rationed, and you had to save your points to get a pair of shoes. Didn't have any nylons obviously. So I spent four years and got very good at drawing a line up the back of my leg. I just drew a line up the back of my leg.

EMC: Well, you had those thick stockings, didn't you? Those lisle stockings?

JCH: Well, who was going to wear those?

EMC: All women.

JCH: No, so we painted our legs. We had stuff that you painted your legs with. You got out of the shower, and you'd just go like that with your legs and then draw a line up the back. Nobody ever knew that you didn't have stockings on. We nearly froze to death crossing the Hudson every morning on the ferry. No gasoline. We ate a lot of Spam. Not much meat.

EMC: Right. Sugar was rationed, too.

JCH: Sugar was rationed. I'm trying to think what else. No gas. You couldn't use any gas. I mean it was all very controlled. But you got used to it. You didn't think about it. I didn't pay any--I just handed Mother all the books, you know, they gave you books. Handed her the books.

EMC: You went to the grocery store and bought with your books.

JCH: That's what Mother did, I guess. I don't know. I never went to a grocery store because I was working on the dumb naval base.

EMC: Right, right. Oh, right. Living was, as you say....

JCH: No cigarettes. You had to go--you had to make friends with somebody who had a store and would save them for you.

EMC: Now, did you smoke during this time?

JCH: Sure. We all smoked.

EMC: Yes, everybody did during the war. It was popular. It was the thing to do.

JCH: They all did. Everybody did. Even in high school, never mind the war. But working on the base you could get more cigarettes. You know, I always had some officer who said, "You need any cigarettes, Joan?" "Yes, I do." "Okay."

EMC: So that's how you got them.

JCH: That's how I got them. But most people had to stand in line. I always had some officer who was perfectly happy to buy another pack for me.

EMC: Oh, that's amazing. Well, we've talked about recreation, what you did socially and family life and rationing.

JCH: Oh, we had a lot of bases around. We had an army base just outside of Cranford, too, not too far. So we all knew tons of Army men.

EMC: Oh.

JCH: Through giving parties, entertaining people. That was your duty. You had to.

EMC: Well, did your parents entertain any military men other than the Australians who were there?

JCH: Well, the Navy men who were in town for the four or five years they were in town. Yes. They had a huge group of friends; I mean they didn't do that much. But all of us girls, we went to all the dances at Fort Monmouth, which was right near us. Signal Corps. You did that. You'd go on a bus to Fort Monmouth. They were all officers. None of us fooled around with anybody but officers. We were very snobbish.

EMC: Very select.

JCH: Well, you could get in a little trouble with a PFC that you didn't know from Brooklyn.

EMC: Well, that's true.

JCH: But you couldn't get in too much trouble with an officer. But it was all pretty much in a group situation.

EMC: Oh, that's good. What was your reaction to VE Day? Do you

remember that? Victory Over Europe in May '45? Were there any celebrations that you attended?

JCH: New York City. Oh, sure.

EMC: This is VE Day.

JCH: VE Day, yes. Not VJ, that was the lesser....

EMC: No, VJ Day was....

JCH: Well, which was the big one?

EMC: VJ Day was August '45 when the war ended.

JCH: Yes, but that was less of a big thing than VE Day in New York.

EMC: Oh, was it? Oh, really.

JCH: Because once it was over in Europe, that was the biggest thing that New York--you couldn't even breathe it was so big.

EMC: Did you go in?

JCH: Sure.

EMC: Where did you go?

JCH: Times Square.

EMC: Oh, I see.

JCH: You couldn't move. That's as far as you got. Oh, yes, we did, we all went right there.

EMC: So you celebrated.

JCH: Well, just....

EMC: Oh, it was with the crowd.

JCH: With the crowd, yes. It was fantastic.

EMC: It must have been.

JCH: Yes, it was just great. VJ Day was....

EMC: Was August 15, '45.

JCH: I was home. I had left the Navy by then. As soon as VE came, I left.

EMC: Oh, that's good. They had a store in New York City?

JCH: Oh, a huge store. Big, big store.

EMC: Did you start immediately then?

JCH: Started the next day.

EMC: Oh, fantastic. Did you like this?

JCH: Oh, this was in merchandising, and this was great fun. They put me in the--

EMC: What department?

JCH: The corset department. There had been no rubber. Ladies had no brassieres that amounted to anything. No corsets, no way to hold up stockings. I mean there was no rubber. So they had to start right away. They were beginning to start and build up their corset department because it had gone right downhill; you couldn't get anything. So I was an assistant in the corset department. That was great fun. I loved that.

EMC: I bet.

EMC: Oh, you did?

JCH: Right away.

EMC: Oh, why did you leave?

JCH: By then I was motivated to go to work. Get a proper job. I thought enough of this clerk stuff, you know, sitting there running the telephone. I needed to do something else.

EMC: Yes, you had two years of that roughly.

JCH: Well, two and a half. It was almost three years. Within a week I left.

EMC: Oh, I see.

JCH: Because we all knew people were coming back, and you'd better be getting a job and get it while you've got a chance.

EMC: Right. So what did you decide to do at that point?

JCH: So I went right into John Wanamaker's. I said, "I've been with the Naval Supply Depot in Bayonne," and they signed me right up as an assistant buyer. Couldn't get me fast enough.

JCH: It was great fun, and I was paid a big salary--for me for that time. Stayed there until, oh, probably a year, year and a half. Then Lord & Taylor's had a sister store in New Jersey in Newark, which was ten times closer than going to New York every day again. They made me buyer of the infants department.

EMC: Oh, that's nice.

JCH: That was huge, that was great.

EMC: That must have been fun.

JCH: Oh, that was grand. Buying was great fun. I loved it. It was all because I stated that I had been in the naval supply, they thought that I knew what I was doing, and of course I didn't have the slightest idea.

EMC: Yes, you weren't a buyer.

JCH: No. I wasn't anything. But they were so hysterical in stores to get people. Nobody was a clerk in a store anymore. Everybody was out working in Navy or Army or factories and things like that.

EMC: Yes, that's true. So when VJ Day came along in August '45, you were in Wanamaker's.

JCH: In Wanamaker's.

EMC: So you weren't celebrating that. So how did you feel about the end of the war when it ended? What was your reaction? Do you remember?

JCH: I hardly remember. I don't know. It didn't affect me terribly. I mean it was over. I'd lost three or four, no boyfriends but close men. I hadn't met my husband yet.

EMC: I was going to ask you that.

JCH: During the middle of the war while I was still with the Navy.... No, I'm sorry, I was with Wanamaker's then. The war was about over, and John had come home. He was at the Globe, so this was probably VJ Day, in that area probably.

EMC: August '45.

JCH: They announced over the radio, while Mother and I were listening to the news--we still didn't have a cook or anything, and we were in the kitchen eating breakfast, listening to the news. I was about to go to work. It was, I don't know, some newsman said, "There's a colonel, and he's asking for--" Then they told all about this Colonel Hanlon who was going to return

the sheets, and would all America turn out and give him all these sheets. Mother said, "Joan, what a wonderful thing! What a nice thing for that young man to do, to promise he'd take the sheets back. Oh," she said, "I'll never make a bed again that I don't think of that colonel." Then she looked at me, and she said, "Why don't you bring somebody like that home for a change instead of all these other people that you're running around with?" She said, "He sounds like a wonderful man." And I said, "Yeah, okay, Mother. Alright, Mom."

EMC: How did you meet him, though?

JCH: Oh, maybe a half or a year later, I was in Nantucket with some friends just on a vacation, just, I don't know, fooling around. Sitting on the beach, just sitting there, and this man came walking down the beach. And John had prematurely white hair, gray hair, then young. We both looked--this other girl and I looked up and said, "Oh, boy, let's look at him. Look at him! Isn't he darling!" She said, "I saw him first." I said, "Never mind. Whoever gets him first." I was sitting there smoking, and he started walking over toward us. Lucy, my friend, said, "Who's he going to talk to? Is he going to talk to both of us?" I said, "I don't know." He came over, and he walked right over to me, and he said, "This is the dumbest line I've ever given anybody, but have you got a match?" I said, "Yes! I have a match." I handed him the match, and he lit a cigarette, and then he said, "Can I

sit down?" And I said, "Sure! The beach, why not?" Three months later we were married.

EMC: Oh, for heaven's sakes!

JCH: But the best fun was--there or five, something about that, I don't know--the best fun was that when I came home from Nantucket.... Now, he was here living in Boston. I came home to Cranford to my home, and I said, "Mom, I want you to know." She said, "What?" I said, "I met the colonel." She said, "What colonel? You're always meeting colonels. I know all about it." I said, "Mom, the colonel with the sheets." "You did?!" I said, "Yes, and he's coming down to visit next weekend." Well, she was as excited as I was.

EMC: What a riot!

JCH: Then I married the colonel with the sheets that my mother had told me two years before, "Why don't you bring somebody like that home?"

EMC: Isn't that amazing?

JCH: Isn't that fun?

EMC: What a coincidence. It's uncanny.

JCH: Yes.

EMC: But it happened.

JCH: We always laughed about it, yes, we did.

EMC: That's quite amazing. So you didn't meet him in the war, you met him after the war.

JCH: Way after the war.

EMC: And he was a reporter?

JCH: Yes.

EMC: Was that his job at the Boston Globe?

JCH: With the Globe, and then we came down here, and he was the sports reporter here until they made him a columnist.

EMC: Oh, that's great. So that's how you ended up in Rhode Island.

JCH: That's how I ended up in Rhode Island, not knowing where Rhode Island was.

EMC: So you were married. What year were you married in?

JCH: 'Fifty-one.

EMC: Oh, '51. Oh, so it was quite a few years after the war.

JCH: Yes, it was quite a while after the war.

EMC: Oh, I see. I thought it was '46 or something.

JCH: Oh, no, no, no. It was way after that. I'd been working at Lord & Taylor's for years.

EMC: Oh, okay. Well, that's very interesting.

JCH: I was twenty-seven, I think, twenty-six, twenty-seven.

EMC: Well, just before you left Bayonne, I want to ask you, did base activities kind of level off there when you were leaving, after VE Day? Or was it still going strong at the base?

JCH: No, it was still going strong because they were still sending tons of ships over. I mean there were all sorts of ships they were still supplying, and they had a huge army over there.

EMC: Yes. So it wasn't leveling off. Did you find that your experiences at Bayonne were helpful in your future work at all?

JCH: Well, only when I said I worked at the naval supply base they gave me a job in a department store.

EMC: Yes, thinking you had ordered things.

JCH: I don't know what they thought. But they were so happy to hire anybody that knew anything about supply and get anybody back into a department store, they grabbed me.

EMC: So any training there you had in strictly clerical matters wasn't that decisive.

JCH: No. I had to learn that from the buyer.

EMC: Yes, yes. So you had to learn whatever you learned there.

JCH: Oh, sure. But it's not very hard to sell corsets, believe me.

EMC: Or probably baby clothes.

JCH: No.

EMC: Well, that sounds kind of interesting. So you were married in '51, and then you moved eventually to Rhode Island, and you've been here ever since.

JCH: We moved right away. We left my house after the wedding, got into the car, and drove to Providence. Well, we went up to New Hampshire for a while and came back to Providence.

EMC: You've been here ever since.

JCH: Been here ever since.

EMC: Oh, isn't that interesting. Do you know if Bayonne--well, Bayonne is still active as a base, I'm sure.

JCH: I imagine it is. I don't know.

EMC: I think it is.

JCH: I really don't know anything about it.

EMC: I do remember one of our officers was CO of Bayonne. I think it's probably scaled down, though, quite a bit.

JCH: Oh, I'm sure. They don't keep all those warehouses packed.

EMC: No, I'm sure it's much smaller.

JCH: One of the things that happened in Bayonne that my husband used to laugh about; of course, he embellished on it, but I'll tell you the truth. One day--but actually it was at night, so that's why I really wasn't there; I was on my own home on the train, I wasn't there--but we heard about it certainly the next morning when we went back to work. One of the sailors from one ship that was there was in New York, drunk. The ship was going to sail the next morning, you know, three in the morning or something. He suddenly realized I'm going to be AWOL. I'd better get back.

He got in a taxicab in New York. He said to the taxicab driver, "Take me to Bayonne!" Apparently. This is how the story went. The taxicab driver, what does he know? So the Indian or Pakistani drove him. The sailor, not knowing anything about the base, didn't realize there was a Marine outer guard, drove in, drove right through the Marine outer guard who stopped the whole bit. No, no, no, no! Drove right through. The sailor said, "I've got to make my ship. I've got to get to that ship." Drove up to the inner Marine guard that the outer guard had already notified: There is a taxi coming, you'd better stop it. The taxicab didn't stop, and they opened fire and fired right into the building that we all worked in.

EMC: Oh, no!

JCH: So, yes, they opened fire. We could see way up. We were on the ninth floor or top floor, and it went right over the top floor. And they said everybody that was working at night were all under their desks. They really literally opened fire with their machine guns.

EMC: But they didn't hit the right target.

JCH: Well, they were aimed up in the air. They were just trying to stop--I'm sure--stop. I don't know.

EMC: Oh, wasn't that something! You missed that episode.

JCH: Yes. But they always kidded me about how when I was under fire. My children and my husband always say, "Oh, you were under fire in Bayonne." And I say, "Yes, we were. We were under fire in Bayonne, believe me."

EMC: But you weren't there.

JCH: No, I didn't happen to be there, but I didn't let that out too much. I let them think I was under fire.

EMC: Well, if you don't have anymore comments on your time at the base or life during World War II in New Jersey, then we can

conclude.

JCH: All right. I can't think of anything more especially. I hope I've answered all your questions and then some.

EMC: Yes, you have, very well. That's good. It's great to have a picture of life during this era because people forget what it was like in World War II for the civilian population.

JCH: Yes.

EMC: Which is important. So I want to thank you very much, Joan. We'll get this transcribed.

JCH: You're welcome.

EMC: Then I will do some light editing and send it back to you for light editing.

JCH: Heavy editing. A good editor, you know, is the backbone of every paper.

EMC: Oh, yes, that's for sure.

JCH: I know all about the newspaper business.

EMC: Right. Thank you very much.

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