

**Helen W. Fitzgerald**  
**Narrator**

**Ken Hunter**  
**June Hunter**  
**Interviewers**

**Interviewed on June 27, 2007, 3:15 PM**  
**Albany, New York**

Q: We are interviewing Helen Fitzgerald in Albany, New York. She served in the WAVES, a branch of the United States Navy, also known as the Women's Auxiliary Volunteer Emergency Service. She served from August 4, 1944 to August 4, 1946. June and Kenneth Hunter are the interviewers. Please tell us your full name and when and where you were born.

HF: My full name that I use now is Helen Wallace Fitzgerald. It takes in both marriages that way. My maiden name is Helen Hines (spells out name). I was born in Auburn, Washington in 1924.

Q: What did you do before you entered the WAVES?

HF: Well, I had a very typical life before I went to school. I graduated from high school, did summer jobs, that sort of thing. I was in a, rather a farming community, a small in central Washington in the Yakima Valley. I went to a small college, about 60 miles from my hometown, Central Washington College of Education and planned to be a teacher. I went three years there, and then when I became 20 years old, I was old enough to join the Navy and I did.

Q: What made you make that decision?

HF: Well, it's hard to say. One thing, I think, one of my friends had joined not too long before, and had come around visiting. And we all tried on her hat and admired her uniform. And that might have got me thinking about joining the Navy. But I was, I guess I was willing to take a risk in a sense to go and try something new. Even getting into the Navy, they had no naval installation around Ellensburg, where the college was, so I had to travel to Spokane, which was a long bus trip to have a physical. I did that in, I would say, April/May and then I had to wait out the time until I was old enough. My birthday was July 12<sup>th</sup>, and at that time I was sworn in and just waiting for orders to go.

Q: And then where did you go from that point?

HF: At that time, I was included with a group of WAVES from the Northwest from Portland, Seattle, Tacoma that area. They started to train in Portland and they picked up women along the way. I got on in Pasco, Washington and then we went to Spokane and then we came directly to Hunter College in the East, in New York City. Of course it was my first time east. I had been up and down the West Coast, but I was thrilled about going to see the East. The east is so special when you're a westerner because everything that you ever read about in the papers or hear on the radio seems to be either Los Angeles or New York and so I was thrilled about coming and seeing things I read about and heard about.

Q: How did you get from the west coast to the east coast? By train? By bus?

HF: We came by train, we all had bunks and we were...it was like a three day trip. The reception there at Hunter College was interesting because I didn't have any idea what to expect. You think about Navy barracks and so on. But the Navy had commandeered some apartment buildings near Hunter and in the Bronx. We were crowded; of course, I think there were 4, maybe, girls to a room. But it was a fancy apartment; it had a step-down, kind of a sunken living room. It probably was a high rent district, I would guess. But that's where we did our training, or where we did our living, but Hunter College buildings was where the training was. We had the classes, and drilled and did a lot of things you do in boot camp.

Q: Can you recall when you got there. Did you undergo physical examinations? An outfitting of clothing? What was that like?

HF: It was very interesting. I has refreshed my memory in reading some old letters, so I very, remember what we did. We had to go, and it was 2 weeks actually before we got our uniforms. We had to go and get fitted. We were issued two blues, which were the navy blue jacket and skirt, and summer uniforms, were sear sucker white and grey striped dress and then a jacket that went over the dress. And then you had two brims they were of hats because you had cap covers in white for summer and in sear sucker you had them in navy blue for the winter months and it was determined by the time of year and where you were what kind of uniform you wore. They did not issue any of the dress whites, I got those later on my own.

Q: What was a typical training day like? When did you rise? When did you go to bed? What were meals like?

HF: We had cafeteria-style dining rooms and our rising was about 6:30 in the morning, I recall. The thing that I remember most about it was so hot in August and in the east. In the part of Washington that I had lived in, in the west coast in general, cools down, when the sun goes down it's cool at night. So I was always used to sleeping under blankets and I couldn't get over how hot it was. You couldn't even have a sheet on you. And while I was there, a hurricane came through and that was kind of exciting. I never lived through a hurricane before. We did not go out in it, of course, but we marched, they had underground tunnels for things, for the classes or the schools. And I remember we were all marched through and told to go home and stay away from the windows and that sort of thing. But we had classes in things like the preparations for wartime, what the (unclear) were doing, identifying planes by silhouettes, that sort of thing. And then we had drill, and that was an inspiring thing to do maybe in 90 degrees, sometimes warmer and the heat and humidity, as I recall. We had to stand at attention, and you stood there, and every so often you'd hear "plop." Somebody would faint and then you would hear this scurrying, there would come the corpsman with a stretcher. He'd drag you off, that happened several times. So, it was not rigorous, but it would depend on your condition. Most people that were in the boot camp were young women, I would say, I was just 20, I would say there were very few that were maybe over 25.

Q: Now what sort of classes did you take in your training?

HF: Well, we did a lot of testing. They gave you aptitude tests, and then they informed you what you were eligible to do or what you could handle and so on. And I was told that I could be a link trainer or I could be an aerographer or a yeoman or whatever. So I chose to be an aerographer, which is the term the navy has for meteorology, it's a weather person. And aerographers are normally on airfields or on ships and they take weather observations and do that type of work. But we didn't know whether we could do it until they told you that you've been chosen. And the school for aerography was in New Jersey. So we were waiting and seeing if the letters were posted on the bulletin boards if you were in or not. And if you hadn't been assigned by the end of your six weeks of boot camp, then you were sometimes put into what they called OGU, which was "Outgoing Unit." And I was, because they weren't ready for me at the aerographers school yet. And it was interesting because my job, I was at the office for the day. That was where I went every morning and I had to ring the bell every half hour. I would go out, and every half hour you would ring so many times, you know, and that was my biggest duty. And then log in and out visitors. So it was kind of interesting kind of work for me to do. And wait. And of course during that time we had liberty, and for a young woman who had never been to New York that was exciting as it could be. We saw some plays and I managed to go to the museums sometimes and it was very heady stuff at that time. Of course we didn't have much money (laughs).

Q: Can you recall what a typical payday was like back in those days?

HF: Twenty-one dollars was what I started out with.

Q: All of twenty-one dollars.

HF: Every two weeks.

Q: Oh, every two weeks.

HF: Yes, twenty-one dollars. And then as you read, I was not eligible to go to officer's school because I was very near-sighted and they had two requirements. You had to have 4-0 vision or you had to have college education. You could have one or the other, you couldn't exempt both of them. So I wasn't fully through college and I had the bad eyes too so that knocked me out of that. But, I went up the ranks from seaman first class, first year seaman, seaman first class, second class, third class, and then when you get into, after training, and I was into after serving, I went up to aerographers mate, first class.

Q: What was the aerographer training like? What were some of the things you had to become familiar with?

HF: Oh that was very interesting. It was intensive study. There were people from the fleet, a lot of men. It was wonderful because we didn't have any men back at school after Pearl Harbor. So there were like 300 fellas and there were 45 WAVES in this class. They called it the Newman's School. It was, it had taken over a Catholic boys' school right down in the Pine Woods outside of Lakehurst. And we went to school, all day long. We had to learn about codes, everything that has to do with weather is based on the weather codes. You have a, you remember what teletype is? Little groups of five letters, five numbers, like so. The first three numbers would be the station's call letters. The third number was maybe the cloud coverage, the fifth... Each one had a meaning, so

they...Where it was it was always wind speed, or barometric pressure, whatever it was you had to learn all this and then you had to practice being able to...we had to enter maps. That's how they did it then, they didn't have TV. So you had a big map, and you were...one person would read the thing and they would read from the thing what it was and then you would enter it on the map. It would be each station, you were supposed to put it in something no larger than a dime. So you had to put the, all these things, numbers around so anybody who was reading the map could tell exactly what the weather conditions were. And that's how they did weather. They drew the fronts and all that kind of thing. They did this all (unclear) information. So that was, memorization was the biggest (unclear) we learned a lot.

Q: When you went through that training, how were...what was your reaction? Were you petrified or so (unclear) progress points you had to meet?

HF: Yes, yes, yes, yes (laughs). We had tests every week and if you didn't make a certain grade then you would get some demerits you had to work off by doing cleaning or something like that. So it was very strenuous, but then we also had activities. We were through like in the evening, late afternoon, evening, we had tennis courts and they had...it was like a private boys' school. They had everything there that you would want to do. And they had dances and you could go on weekends, they would have a 48-hour pass and I remember going into New York, which was only like a 3-mile trip or over to Lakewood. So it was...there was a lot of fun too, and the girls that I was with were all very much like I'd grown up with. They were college trained, very nice, and I had no problems with anybody. I enjoyed it. We always were under pressure, always under pressure to learn. And, when we were through that, the boys all went out to air stations, went out to ships. And the girls were all sent to Washington D.C.

Q: Did you find any prejudice towards being a woman with all these men going through the schools?

HF: No, we just loved it (laughs). No, because there weren't very many girls there. If you wanted a date, you could have as many dates as you wanted. They were very careful about...we had strict barracks, and again they were nice dorms, they weren't barracks and such. But, you had to be in at a certain time, and so they took care of us that way. But, we were free to go out on our own on weekends. But it was...no the boys, all the boys that I knew there, I don't think I ever met anyone that wasn't what I call "a nice boy" and certainly "a nice girl." They were all great.

Q: What were the officer mix-up you had there? Did you have men and women officers in training? How were they...?

HF: We had in the...at the training school, in boot camp, we had women officers, all of them. In the training school, we had all men officers, and I can't think of any other women. I had some pictures of classes, and I can't see any woman who was an officer then. But, I mentioned going to Washington, D.C. The reason that everybody was sent there was because they had this big communication center at Ward Circle in Washington D.C. And they had these huge WAVE quarters, D, 5,000 WAVES. It was the biggest WAVE quarters in the country. And our sole purpose, our purpose, aerographers, were to help find meaning in these little five word, or five number, things in the Japanese weather code because we knew what was a lot likely combinations and

so we sat all day, all day, everyday looking at the teletypes, the messages from the Japanese. It was very important because we had no information from the west, out in the Pacific, and that's the way the weather moved. So, it was very important to get that information. So that's what, that's what we did and we were, you know, told (unclear) never tell anybody, this is top secret. But, I can talk about it fifty years later. I don't think anybody cares. It was, we used to have burn bags, we couldn't throw away paper or anything. You'd have to go down, burn it that night. It was very, very strict and secretive.

Q: Going back just a little bit to basic training. Today we have the vision of what a drill instructor was like, they're real nasty and mean. How were the women drill instructors, female...?

HF: They were very nice. I can't think of many negative things about boot camp actually other than that it was very hot there. But it was a very good experience for me, and the training school. It was intensive training, but it wasn't unpleasant.

Q: Now did you have any opportunity to use your training for flight operations in the Lakehurst area?

HF: Not in Washington. We went to Lakehurst and we saw all the balloons and all, because that was our official closest business or office type thing. And we would go there for, maybe, if you had a dental appointment or something, that's where you went, to Lakehurst. But, we had nothing, at that time, that we did other than learn how to do it. We learned how to take weather observations by machine and observing and all that. When we got to Washington, the exciting time that I spent in Washington was because of the timing it was. It was when the war was getting over and everybody was hyped up with the news. We recently had parades when Eisenhower came back from, on V-Day and then VJ-Day, I was there and saw the big parades. And then when the war was over, it was like madness, you know, everybody in Washington D.C. was amazing.

Q: You were very happy...

HF: Oh, happy, happy, happy, happy, yes.

Q: And you probably haven't seen anything quite like it since.

HF: Not, no. I don't think it was ever. There was never a time, that I think, don't think, that the whole nation was ever so behind, so focused on the war. Everybody was involved in some way with the war. Rationing, or volunteer work, or whatever. But everybody was of one mind. There were no anti-war at that time. They were later, but not there. Everything was one way. You always felt that you were well supported.

Q: And that makes a big difference.

HF: Yes.

Q: Now how long were you in Washington?

HF: I was there from January til October of '45, and then after the war ended we were liberated from Washington, D.C. (unclear). All of the girls who had been "captive" there, we were all sent out to different airfields. They'd start a big train from Washington and we all got on it (laughs). They dropped some in Jacksonville, dropped

some in Pensacola. And, I remember, I was going to Corpus Christi and we stayed in New Orleans for a day, and that was an experience, all you've ever heard about New Orleans. I remember we all had lunch at Antione's for like \$3.00 (laughs), which was amazing. But when we got to Corpus Christi, then we began doing the kind of thing we had learned in training school. We were actually in the Navy then, and we had had, we'd been spoiled in Washington because it was ladies' lunch and have chicken salad and then we started eating Navy food, you know. Beans for breakfast and stuff. It was different.

Q: Tell us some of those, how different...

HF: Yes, what was different. Because we were, there were a lot of ways. We were used to being a little bit exclusive, I have to admit, because we were always together. And we had, we were working shifts, you know like midnight to 8 in the morning, and then daytime, and so on. And uh, so, those kinds of things set us apart a little bit. When we got to Corpus Christi, we were in the general barracks with all the WAVES, and there were a lot of WAVES who were not like the aerographers mates, you know there were a lot of girls who were in, and not saying anything negative about them, but they were a different kind of girls, you know. So we still tried to keep sort of clannish, but it was a little more difficult. But it was, in a professional sense, we were always with the same people. I've had lifelong friends from that experience. I just talked to one yesterday that I went through those years with. After I read my letters I thought, oh I've got to call Jean (laughs).

Q: So you've gotten together, like reunions..?

HF: We have had...once or twice, but the people are so scattered, that some people have some friends, and so you don't have too many that everybody knows about. I would say that in Corpus Christi I had just one, like a buddy, that I spent most of my time with because we had the same shifts. And there were other girls who had been through the whole experience so we all got together in Washington. We would have bike hikes and go down to the Tidal Basin and that sort of thing. But, after we got out to the airfield, we didn't see the ones who went to California or ones who stayed in Florida. We would have little get-togethers with our group in Corpus Christi. It was fun.

Q: Now, did you have many funny experiences?

HF: Oh, well I, yes, I can think of a lot of funny experiences. The...one that I think I mentioned in the paper, I felt was hilarious because we were all very anxious to fly because that meant you got more money. You know, you'd get flight skills, and so anybody that had flight skills would like \$100 a month and that's a lot of money, you know. And then they would give you more on retirement or when you were enlisted they gave you a bonus. So, we all wanted to have flight skills. In order to get those, you had to go outside the Continental US and there was a weather flight, a weather op, that took off everyday, a PBY, and the weather person from our office, the aerology office, would go down there and we would get on board the plane and we would take observations of the currents of the seas and you could tell by the waves how much the wind was, we'd take the pressure and all these things. And, that was the purpose of the flight was to get the weather observations. They would go up four hours, two hours, and back, but they went outside the continental US. So that was the part that made it a very popular flight

because there were tons of officers who had flight skills but they didn't have access to planes anymore. They were sitting at desks, so they would come down to get on that flight. And they would line up to get on that flight. And especially toward the end of the month you had to get it in. So, this one time we had a young fellow from the fleet and he had gone down for the day for the flight. And, he came back and we said "what's the matter?" And, he said, "well they didn't have room for me." And we thought that was the funniest thing in the world. The weather flight did not have room for the weather man (laughs). That was the only time I heard that.

Q: Now for the person that's uninitiated for the PBY was nicknamed "The Catalina"

HF: Yes, a seaplane.

Q: It was a seaplane. Now did you take off from land on it and land at sea on it and then take off from sea? Did you have that experience?

HF: We took off from land. I don't remember ever going near the water to get on the plane, no. But, we also flew in another plane, SNJ, you know what that's a training plane. And everyday they would have a weather hop that would go up like this (make a spiral motion with hands) over the thing, up to 20,000 feet. And, they had an instrument strapped to the wing of the plane that would take all these tracings on there. And so we had to put the oxygen on and it was quite exciting. Then you'd come down again. And, then you'd have to take the thing and go back to the office and work up the information for the people who...actually in the aerology office, the weather office, the officers did the actual "diagnosing" I should say or reading the maps. That took a little more training. That's what they'd do, put in the isobars, things like that, connecting equal pressure points, that how you know, weather maps have these lines that go around like that (motions with hands).

Q: Can you remember your first flight because I think most people say the first flight is the most thrilling and it is never the same again.

HF: Well, it was a little boring, after. Well we first did there was a little bit of flurry because, I felt, that the plane was on fire (laughs). That's what I thought. And there was a lot of scurrying around. I didn't know yet whether there was something, but it seemed to me that something was obviously wrong. But we went up, and then all you do, you just go up and up. There's nothing to do. It's interesting to see it, do it once, but if you do it a lot, we didn't do it that often. We didn't do it everyday by any means. They pass you around to the different ones. But, yea when you get used to things, it was kind of boring, four hours out on the plane (laughs).

Q: And you don't have that much scenery (laughs).

HF: The fun thing of the flying though was taking hops on leaves because that was where you had, you'd go down to operations and see if anyone was going to San Diego or going to Los Angeles or wherever. And if you were lucky, you could catch a hop. So, I remember the first leave I went home, and that was a long way. I got a hop to, I think, Tucson or something, and then to San Diego and then up. And, I had been told I had to have a parachute with me in case I got into small planes. So, I had this parachute I carried with me, and carried it all the way home. And I got home and I put it on, we had a (unclear) porch and eat-in porch. So I just put the thing there and somebody came to

see me. I don't know what, a family member or something, but I can't recall who did it. But, the, I said that was a parachute and he said "oh this is it?" And he took it by the red handle (laughs) and "poof" it opened up. And, I was terrified that I was going to get in trouble. We stuffed it back in and I was just absolutely terrified. And I did have to have it. I did fly, my last leg I flew on a small plane. We'd go in marine planes, navy planes, army planes, whatever there was. And wherever you landed, all you had to do was find a woman's quarters and the WAVES and the marines women (unclear) and so we always had no problem. But I remember, the parachute

Q: Well, so you made it back just carrying the parachute?

HF: I carried it in the bag like it was packed. And this is something that you get varying, sometimes people will tell you, and I think it's true, that they have parachute packers and stuff, and they string them out and they have to be all just right. And then I've had people tell me ah just stuff them in there and it'll open. So, I didn't know (laughs). I was not sure which it was going to be.

Q: So then when you got back with it, did you have to report to someone?

HF: Oh, I just took it back and said, you know, "it's used." (laughs) I used it. But it was, that was the exciting part I can remember. Going down and not knowing where you're going to be and who, what flight you're going to go on.

Q: That's the enjoyment of being a young person.

HF: Yea, that's right, exactly so. And the idea when you took hops, you had to make sure that you had enough time at the end that if you didn't get a hop you had enough time to get back by bus or train. So that put a little bit of a limit on going out. You couldn't afford to wait here and there. Sometimes you did wait all day (unclear) getting a ride.

Q: Now on the bases you were on, you mentioned earlier in the Washington D.C. area, that you had the opportunity to go to the USO facilities and so forth. What was the general scene, what was it like at a USO facility? A lot of people know that Bob Hope was behind it, the support of it. Did you see any celebrities at any of these?

HF: The only ones that I can remember actually seeing, really big celebrities, was...Gary Cooper came when I was in boot camp one time, and Frank Sinatra when I was in Corpus Christi. That was a madhouse, you know, he was very popular at the very beginning and everybody, they had a big hanger and people were standing on the wings of planes and stuff. It was amazing. But, other than that, I saw a lot of New York shows when I was in Washington I went up to New York and saw a lot of really first rate shows because we could go in and get standing room only, so I saw stars that way.

Q: You didn't have to pay or...?

HF: Oh no, we paid. But, you know, it's amazing the difference, like I said you could get the hotel Taft at \$3.00 a night, sometimes you would have to go for \$6.00 a night for the hotel, but that's not bad.

Q: By today's standards, right?(laughs)

HF: I remember, I went and worked later at the University (unclear) we stayed at the Taft, it was like, state's rates were like \$38.00 (laughs). That was back in the seventies.

Q: Now do you recall back, that period...on, food. When you had a liberty in a city or so forth, was food scarce in restaurants or so?

HF: (shakes head) Washington D.C. was full of people. Restaurants were, there was no austerity there at all. I mean, you got word from the home-front, my folks were rationing, but I didn't notice that at all. And, of course, that was the only place that I really did see a lot of things. We went to a...Washington was a wonderful place to be because they had a lot of free concerts, the Marine band, the Navy band, and the Smithsonian. All these things that you could see, it was absolutely great for anyone that was interested, or art, that kind of thing.

Q: Now, are there people that you ever, I know you mentioned earlier you hadn't really had a reunion...

HF: No, but the biggest effect on my life was I met my future husband when I was in Corpus Christi. He was a cadet in an aviation program, and so I met him in that last summer that I was in the service. And then I wrote to him. He went to finish his training in Pensacola and I went back to college and got my degree. And so he came up to see me at Christmas time. Long bus trip all the way from Pensacola to Seattle (laughs). Anyway, so yes that, he was from Michigan, I had never met anybody from Michigan. I think that one of the results of World War II was like a fruit basket upset because this happened innumerable times. Men would meet local girls. Everybody was changed, used to be born and raised and lived within a 50 mile radius, and no more. That really changed things.

Q: Now holidays away from home...The services were known for special meals on days like Halloween...Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter...Can you remember were they regular feasts?

HF: Well they were, they always had like Turkey dinners, like I remember. Often I, for the Christmas when I was in New Jersey, I went home with a girl from down the river, Rhinebeck. She was a special friend because I had been with her since boot camp. And she asked me there, so I had spent Christmas that year. Then the next Christmas I think I went home on leave, so I can't really tell you too much. But, I do remember Thanksgiving having a lot of turkey, regular turkey dinners and things. And we used to have; everybody had food sent to them. You'd get the girls would have buffets, put the ironing board up and lay the stuff out.

Q: So you shared everybody's...

HF: Oh yea.

Q: I can remember, that was a very public time, mail call, everybody gathered together to see what special treat somebody was getting. And you are right, people were very sharing.

HF: Oh, and I can remember the letters that I wrote, "oh I loved your cookies" everybody liked cookies, cookies, cookies. That's why I'm baking cookies here as a volunteer, I guess, a cookie thing (laughs).

Q: What kinds of cookies were most popular?

HF: Well, of course, the ones that were sent...it was difficult because they had to travel well. They were probably oatmeal cookies.

Q: Fruit cake?

HF: Oh, fruit cake! Yes, fruit cake was a good traveler (laughs).

Q: (laughing) That's probably why many people don't like fruit cake, although we enjoy it.

HF: Very true.

Q: Now, when you left the service, tell us what the process was like.

HF: Well, it was interesting there because we had been, we had joined for the duration of the war. And, so when the war was over...prior to that we had been given this option of signing on for another five months. And that, kind of was in that ending of the war, I think it was like May to like September, and the war ended in August. I think it was in the summertime, and September perhaps. So we had, at that time, in Corpus Christi, they were discharging people by point system. You had so many points by how long you'd been in, then as you reached that point (claps hands) out you go. So I, my group of people I worked with were coming like every two weeks and some more would leave. And that was kind of amusing and we all wanted to go to Mexico City from Corpus Christi. One of the girls who had been discharged in June had gone down there and just loved it. So she went back down to the University for the summer session. So she wanted all of us to come down. So there were eight, I think, WAVES, but most of them were being discharged earlier. Another girl and I had to wait until our point system came up, so we had two weeks to wait before we could go for them, I guess. Anyway, we had two weeks to spare and we took a trip to Florida, on...we were out of the Navy, understandably we had been discharged. We had false leave papers, we wore our uniforms, and we got hops (laughs) and went to Florida. And we hopped from one place to the other. And then we got a plane in Pensacola going to Corpus Christi. It happened to be a visiting admiral and it was a small plane and very plush. And we sat (sits with her head down looking nervous). We were so scared that somebody would ask us to see our papers or something. We wanted to sneak into Corpus Christi. So when we got there, they had the band out, it was like can't believe how many people were there. And they had moved the dormitories while we were gone, and we couldn't find the women we were supposed to go with, they had left. Uh it was a big mess, so we...They had vetted a car for us to go to Mexico City and we ended up, this other girl and I, we had to go by bus because they had already gone on ahead. So we went by bus, it was like \$23.00 or something to go to Mexico City (laughs). But we were all there for ten days. It was fabulous.

Q: So then...

HF: Then I came home, visited parents or visited aunts and uncles and so on. And, stopped in California and saw one of my good WAVE friends, several of the fellows who had been in Corpus were out, and I remember we all got together, that was in the fall of '46 and (unclear) went back to school.

Q: Now which, did you return to the school which you started out in?

HF: Same school. I had thoughts of going, I had sent information to Stanford, I wanted to go to Stanford. I don't know what happened, I just went back and finished. And then I got my degree, and then my husband to be at that time, he had gotten his wings, but he wasn't eligible for a leave so I had to go down to Pensacola to get married. So I got on the train and went to Pensacola. Actually, it went to Chicago and went to a wedding of my best friend who I talked to yesterday. She was just out of Chicago. Then I went down and we were married and then he went into the Navy. He was in the Navy for two years after that. He was a flier. He flew PB4Y-2's. So that was interesting, too.

Q: Now, what did you take in college? What was your degree in?

HF: Well it was a teaching certificate, kind of a thing like most states have. A teacher's college, they used to call them Normal schools back then. I majored in art, I think, and education, my degree was in education, for teaching, but I never really liked it. I tried it once, and I never liked it. When we were in Norfolk, while my husband was on duty there, I had already discovered I didn't want to teach. I didn't like the idea, so I went to business college for a year and so I came out...and so when he got out of the Navy, I was ready to, I worked as his private secretary for a couple of years while he was going, finishing...he loved the west, so he came out west and he went to the University in Seattle.

Q: Now was your training...did you take advantage of the GI Bill? What was the college scene like with all the...?

HF: Oh, yes, yes yes. It was very interesting because of the people...I had started in school in the fall of '41 so I knew a lot of people who were like freshmen, sophomores, juniors in that period, and all of a sudden after Pearl Harbor, they just vanished. You couldn't find a boy on campus. There were five, four (unclear) left on campus. It was a small school, about 400 people maybe. But after, everybody came back. It was wonderful, everybody...I took flying lessons, and I had took lessons from fellas I had known who had been in the Marine Air Corps and it was fun. We had, I think it was about \$100 or \$125 a month that they gave us and all of our books and tuition and that sort of thing.

Q: How did you find the reception at the college there? Being an older person with the experience in life of being in the service and so forth...and seeing youngsters right out of high school coming.

HF: Different. Yea, it was a different group sort of. You know, they had their group and then the older ones, and especially, a lot of the returning vets were married. So they had a married village that all the married ones lived in. So it was yea, it was different in that sense, but I was still only 22. It wasn't like I was that old (laughs) if I think about it now.

Q: Looking back on it, was there anything you regretted? Would you do it over again?

HF: Oh I think I would, yea. I don't regret anything that happened during those years, but I think I was very lucky in having a very positive experience. I had no problems. Nobody ever yelled at me or anything. There was never anything negative in what I was

doing. And I was lucky enough again to be in a part of the Navy that was respected for what they were doing and that sort of thing too so it was very nice.

Q: Did you every use any of the knowledge you learned in the service?

HF: Well, not that much, no. I had...it was interesting because still at that time I probably could have worked at the weather bureau or something, but I didn't because I went right to getting married. But my friend who I had said I had gone to her wedding, she married an army fellow and he and she went to Alaska. He worked for the U.S. Weather Bureau because he had been, in the army, had been a weather person. So, some people did do that.

Q: How else has the service affected your life? I know you volunteer here at the Stratton VA Medical Center.

HF: Well, I've been here as a patient for nearly fifteen years, I guess '93 or 4 I started coming. And so, this has been like a second home. I've been here a lot. I've done a lot of things here. I've watched them take pills and all that sort of thing. I have a lot of appointments here. So a few years ago, I had done the usual retired thing of being on boards of senior centers and all that. I've done a lot of that kind of thing. And I just decided that I wanted to do something that was one on one, and I just got off three boards, I guess and said to my friend Rachelle who's in charge of the Creative Arts Festival. I said you know I'd like to do something over here where I can see people and see what you do and how it affects people. And so she said...she was a supervisor on the board where I work at now, which is the Hospice board. So she said, "You can come. We had a girl bake cookies and she had to leave." So I am the cookie baker now. I come every Wednesday.

Q: Now do you cook right here in this facility?

HF: They have a kitchen right there. That is the main thing is because it smells so good...everybody...you wait until their lunch is settled a bit and then you (unclear) Everybody is excited about it, even the people who work there. It smells so good. And it's something that breaks up the day. And then I go around and talk to them. I water flowers, fill ice pitchers, clean up, clean the refrigerator. The hospice kitchen is for hospice only, for the patients, their families, there a lot of families who come so I actually...I know a lot of the family members now because they're long term patients. So its nice, I have the cart out. About a month or so ago, I had trouble with my knees so I was using a cane. I could not handle cookies and the cane so Stephanie said, "well can you use a cart?" That was about a month ago. Now I'm fine, I'm not using the cane, but I'm using the cart. So I have my cookies on the top, and then I expanded a little bit. I make coffee and I go around like a coffee wagon (laughs). And one of our patients, I just talked to her today, she's an artist and she does a lot of painting. So we were talking and I said, "Why don't you paint a picture for the cookie wagon and put it right...?" So she says, "I could do that."

Q: No, that should be very nice. So anything else you wish to say?

HF: Oh I don't know. I don't know how time is, I haven't watched it. Are we running short?

Q: So well okay. This has been enjoyable. Thank you very much for sharing your story with us.

HF: Well thank you for having me and I truly enjoyed my experience with doing it.