

Interviewee: Patricia Cavanaugh "Pat" Ethier

Interviewer: Thomas Saylor

Date of interview: 8 October 2001

Location: living room of the Ethier home in St. Paul, MN

Transcribed by: Kimberly Johnson, August 2002

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, August 2002

Pat Ethier was born 30 March 1923 in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1941 she graduated from St. Paul Monroe High School, and then went to work as an optics engraver for Buckbee Mears Co.

In July 1943 Pat volunteered for service in the US Navy WAVES and, after Basic Training at Hunter College in New York City, went to Lakewood, New Jersey, to be trained as an aerographer, or weather observer. This school ended in December 1943, and Pat was then stationed at North Island Naval Air Station in San Diego, California, where she remained until being discharged in May 1945 as an aerographers mate second class.

In January 1945, while still a WAVE, Pat married Orville Ethier of St. Paul, then serving with the US Navy in California. Pat lived briefly in Florida, while Orv was stationed there at Mayport Naval Air Station, but by the end of 1945 Orv had been discharged and the couple had returned to St. Paul, where they remained. Pat raised two children and was a homemaker until 1964, when she took a job at the St. Paul Public Library. She also graduated from Metro State University, St. Paul, in 1973, but remained at the library until retiring in 1986.

During this interview, Pat talks clearly and at some length about the varied experiences of a woman in uniform, and about challenges (especially the shortage of housing) with the transition from wartime to peacetime economy after 1945.

Pat Ethier died on 11 July 2008.

Interview key:

P = Pat Ethier

T = Thomas Saylor

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: This is the 8th of October 2001 and this is tape 1, side 1 of the interview with Pat Ethier. First, Pat, I want to thank you publicly, on the tape, very much for taking time out of your day to sit and talk with us. Thanks very much. Well, the first question, I wanted to just ask you when and where you were born.

P: I was born in St. Paul, on the east side, March 30, 1923. I don't know if there is anything specific or sensational about my birth (*laughs*), I just, I was born in St. Joseph's Hospital.

T: Did you attend grade school and high school in St. Paul?

P: Yes I did, but when I was 12 we moved to the West 7th area, so I went to St. Patrick's school for seven years and then went to St. Stanislav's on, near West 7th Street, which was the Bohemian school, which was very different for me. It was, well it was bilingual. When we would go to church on Sunday we would hear a sermon in English and in Latin and then, first it would be Latin, and then it would be English, and then it would be the Bohemian version of the homily.

T: You graduated from high school in 1940 or '41?

P: In 1940. It was 1940, from Monroe High School.

T: So in 1941 you were out of high school. Let me ask you about the 7th of December, 1941. What were you doing when you first heard that news?

P: Well I was a sophomore in college, and it was very, well, much as it is today [in the aftermath of 11 September 2001], people don't know what is going to happen in the future. I was, I remember that afternoon I had gone to a movie, and came home to find that this had happened. So at first your reactions were, you know, Pearl Harbor wasn't even something that people were all that familiar with. I was acquainted with Orv, and the war, but I knew that he was there [at Pearl Harbor], saw his family once in a while, and we'd commented on this had affected them and him. I guess you kind of had the feeling that, uh, going to school with no direct goals in mind was kind of, not important, that you felt that maybe there was something more that you could be doing. (*pauses three seconds*) But I finished out that school year.

T: That is the '41-'42 school year?

P: Yes. I was at [the College of] St. Catherine, in St. Paul.

T: How about your folks? Do you remember how they reacted?

P: Well, my dad had been in the Navy during World War I, and of course he had had some acquaintance with what was happening, he'd gone overseas, to France. And so he was, of course, concerned. I remember through the years before the war, my mother would buy these little things from Japan, and my dad would say, "You're furnishing them with ammunition to fire at your son!" So he was, he had this feeling all along that this was something that was going to happen to us, eventually. And I think at that time it was probably quite a good deal of insight that a lot of people didn't have.

(A, 73)

T: Right. Pat, did you have siblings in the military?

P: My brother ultimately went in the Navy [in 1944]; he was married and had two children. I had a feeling that, I mean he was drafted, and I guess that was kind of the thoughts I had about joining the Navy was that, that I would replace him. But of course it doesn't work that way. So, he went anyway. He went in '44.

T: Did he serve stateside, or abroad?

P: He was stationed on an LST, which is rather interesting because LSTs in many cases were combat. But he had, it was hazardous duty, and, we come to find out later, that there was another man, another James Cavanaugh's resume, or whatever, in his jacket, so he was sent to hazardous duty married with two children. By mistake.

T: Pat, when did you make the decision to join some branch of the service?

P: Well, I had wanted to join as soon as the Navy started their service for women, and I should interject here that WAVES stands for Women Appointed for Volunteer Emergency Service. Now somebody had to spend a lot of time thinking up that acronym, I'm sure, but I had, they had started in July of '42, and I wasn't 20 until March of 1943.

T: And 20 was the cutoff date?

P: Yes, you had to be 20. And I remember my dad telling me, you know everybody will be able to figure out your age, from now on. And that wasn't a particular concern to me at 19! *(laughs)*

T: So you had to wait a little while until you were actually 20, and at that point did you sign up pretty much right away? When you were 20?

P: Well, it was July before I did. You had to have a certain number of things to take with you once you went in the Navy, and I wanted to save up enough money to have that, so I had to work for a while.

T: What kind of things?

P: Well, for instance, they would tell you different things that you should bring as far as your personal toiletries and things like that, of course. And, various things, they started out with so many changes of underthings and things like that to start out, you know before you'd get your uniform.

T: Right.

P: So, I would need luggage, and I didn't have anything like that. So there were various things that I felt I had to have as personal belongings before I went in the Navy. I worked long enough that I could save that, and have a little bit in the bank as a cushion so that I could come home for things if I needed to.

T: Was that different then for men? Did they have to save up a number of things?

P: No, I don't think so because men, you know, they just have the clothes on their backs and they don't worry much about anything. They stood in a line in the recruitment center and they were handed a bundle of clothes! *(laughs)*

T: It worked differently for women, did it?

P: Yes, yes it did. It was several days before we got uniforms.

T: That's very interesting.

P: You know, we would have to be measured and fitted and whatever, you know, to get the proper size uniforms. And of course that was like all uniforms – nothing fit! *(laughs)*

T: So you had to have some of your own stuff, that's interesting. What was the response of your folks when you told them you'd gone down to enlist?

P: Well... my mother wasn't as concerned about it, I don't think. Dad was very reluctant to let me go. And they had to sign for me, you still had to have a signature from your parents until you were 21.

T: For women, not for the men though.

P: Yes.

T: So women had a higher age level?

P: Yes, I had to be 20 and if you wanted to be an officer, you needed to have two years of college, which I had, and two years of business experience, which I didn't have. So they wouldn't even accept your enlistment, your enrollment, but anyway you couldn't apply for a commission without that.

T: So you had to have both your parents sign, or just one?

P: I don't recall. I think maybe just one. And they did ultimately agree to, but I think I could have threatened them; I could be very nasty! *(laughs)*

(A, 166)

T: Okay, so you were determined to go.

P: Yes, yes.

T: And your dad was finally...

P: I think he was reluctant to let me go, yeah.

T: But he finally signed for you.

P: Yes, finally agreed. And I think over the years, I think he came around to being rather proud of me.

T: That's a good thing. Where did you go for Basic Training?

P: Hunter College, in New York, in the Bronx.

T: And that's where, if I understand correctly, all WAVES went to the same place?

P: Yes, all of us women would go to Hunter College at that time.

T: What was this, how long did Basic Training last?

P: I went in the last part of August, and I probably didn't start training I think until September, and we were assigned rather quickly, as I recall, because our class was supposed to be three months. And that was because the holidays, Thanksgiving I know I missed, that I'm thinking it was probably about eight weeks, six weeks maybe. We lived in apartment buildings in the Bronx, that was what our billets were, apartment buildings. I remember that before we were sent to our assignments, if there was some time elapsing, then you know you didn't have any

duties, you had to report in the morning. And because, as classes would finish, they'd maybe have different times that their assignments would start, so sometimes you would be there for a few days.

T: I see. What was Basic Training like for you? A good experience? Bad experience?

P: Yeah, it was kind of a good experience in a way. You know, it was purposeful I suppose, because you felt some sort of discipline. It didn't have any real goal, I wouldn't say, other than just to probably train you to be acceptable, amenable to orders, and to do, do a lot of marching. *(laughs)* Not anything you're going to do in the future, you know [as a woman].

T: Were you are, was there physical activity too: push-ups, pull-ups, and running and all that kind of stuff?

P: Not a great deal, just more or less the marching took care of that. I don't recall any, we had, no, there was no physical activity classes that I can remember.

T: Was this your first time away from home for a long period of time?

P: I had worked at Glacier Park the summer before, so I had had that experience for a short time. Otherwise, I hadn't been, Chicago was as far away as I had ever been – or Montana, of course, for Glacier Park.

T: What was it like being in a pretty different location for a, in New York, for a longer period of time.

P: Oh, it was wonderful!

T: Did you like New York?

P: Yeah, oh yes, very much. After we finished our Basic Training we got an opportunity to go [on a trip], and when I went to my training school, we were close to New York, so I was able to go for the weekend. Yes, that was interesting. It was interesting in that you could never do today what we did in those days, take the subway downtown, tour Manhattan, out to the Bronx, get off, walk a couple blocks to our apartments. Nothing, not a worry in the world. You know, today it's not like that at all.

(A, 225)

T: From Hunter College you went to New Jersey, is that right?

P: Yes, I had asked for a specific school since I had had some inkling that I was going to work for the federal service. I had taken the exam and passed it and had gotten

an appointment, but then because of budget restrictions the appointments were cancelled. So because of that, when I applied for [Air Guard] school, I'm sure that's why I was taken. It was rather, a good assignment, a good rank to aspire to.

T: Was this school in New Jersey a large training facility?

P: It was a large estate that had been taken over by the Navy. It had been a prep school for young men, a Jesuit prep school. The classes were, they had a regular classroom building and the mansion was where the WAVES were, where their quarters were.

T: Were there men on this facility too?

P: Yes, there were Marines, Coast Guard, and the Navy. All three services were trained at Newman school.

T: What about the relations between enlisted, or between men in uniform and women in uniform here? How would you describe those?

P: Well, when we were in school of course, it was just a co-ed school. We had classes all day and whatever. There were many restrictions on after dark – couldn't be out on the grounds. There were no, there was no opportunity shall we say, to have any after-hours (*laughs*)... liaisons. And it was, I want to back up and turn to something else. You were asking about my parents objections. I was engaged to Orv [Ethier] at that point. [Pat and Orv would marry in 1945]

T: Already by '43?

P: Yes, by the time I went in the Navy. Orv was very opposed to my going in the Navy, very opposed. I think he felt that, you know, I'll have the opportunity to meet other men and sailors being what they are, I think that he was concerned about me being away.

T: Did he try to talk you out of it?

P: Well, he tried to talk me out of it but, of course, it was long distance. You know long distance by mail, by snail mail. It was really snail main then!

T: He was on the destroyer *Ward*, in the Pacific, until December 1944.

P: Yes, and of course, he was saying that he wished I wouldn't do that, but of course I was determined that I was going to, so I did. As far as relationships with other servicemen, the ones that I encountered always were fairly respectful, and I think that maybe part of it was the fact that we had this feeling of needing to keep our behavior at a level maybe even above what the ordinary person was, because of this sometimes stigma attached to servicewomen.

T: What kind of stigma was that?

P: Well, I don't necessarily mean stigma. I mean, I guess my choice of words was not good. I think that there may have been the perception that, there could have been a little bit of, oh, you were in the Navy because you were looking for men (*laughs*).

T: On the lookout.

P: Yeah, right, that sort of thing, and that maybe your behavior would be a little suspect because of that. I don't know. Maybe this was just a perception, and not all...

T: That's interesting.

P: But I think we had the feeling, the girls that I was with, had the feeling that we needed to be a little above and beyond the average person because we needed to bring that respect to ourselves.

T: Your instructors here, were they both men and women?

P: Yes. The head of the school was Commander Barber, who was a noted meteorologist before, he'd written a book on meteorology and he was the commanding officer. And then there were both men and women. We had a very petite little woman who had been an instructor, college professor before, and she was very knowledgeable, very capable of teaching both men and women, because we were in the classes together.

T: So classes were mixed, too?

P: Yes.

T: When you had male instructors, do you feel that both men and women students were treated alike?

P: Oh yeah, I think so. I think so.

T: Let's switch gears a little bit – was there a thought in your mind, by this time, being a woman in uniform, of what the enemy was?

P: What the enemy was?

T: The US was at war with Germany and Japan. Was that an abstract thing, or did you begin to think concretely about the enemy?

(A, 309)

P: Oh, yeah, it couldn't be anything else at that time. Whether you were civilian or service, everybody's thoughts were about, you know what our purpose was, that we had to win this war, and get back to normal living. Of course we never really did do that, but there was a unity of purpose certainly. I don't think you got up every morning and said, "Oh, they're going to take care of those Japs today!" you know, or anything like that, but you were clued into what you needed to feel about the things that were happening, you heard the news, read the newspapers, didn't get as much information as now. And even our, I shouldn't say even because they were really very important, but the weather codes were all in code, every weather report that you got in you had to decode before you entered it on your weather map, because you were well aware that all of this was classified information and you needed to be careful with that.

T: So you encountered that, in a sense, a military situation mentality on a daily basis?

P: Oh yes, oh yes.

T: Pat, after training in New Jersey, you went to the other end of the country, didn't you?

P: Yes.

T: What was the name of the base you were at in San Diego?

P: North Island Naval Air Station. Officially it was US Naval Air Station at North Island, San Diego.

T: How large a facility is that, or was it then, rather?

P: It was a very large air station. It extends out into the Bay in San Diego, attached to Coronado. To get back and forth you had to take a ferry! We called it a nickel snatcher (*laughs*), and North Island was removed somewhat from the ships in the Bay; it was removed from the mainland.

T: Did you have quarters on base there, or off base?

P: Yes, when we first went to San Diego, to North Island, we were stationed in Coronado, and had barracks along the bay in Coronado. Then they built barracks on North Island, and we were very reluctant to leave Coronado, but after we got over to North Island it was okay. Talking about, was it a big base or not, they used to run what were like wagons (*laughs*), they had like a tractor pulling these large things that were transportation around the island that you could get off and on at various places around the island. So there were a lot of places that you wanted to go to that

required you to get in one of those. We were very close to the tower, so we could use those, no big deal.

T: The walking distances would have been too great for some places?

P: For some places on the island, yes.

T: Can you describe your job that you did?

P: I was a weather observer. What you did was that you recorded temperatures, pressures, cloud cover, the various instruments they used on the radio balloons to get the upper air temperatures, air pressures and so forth. You would do these, I think it was every six hours we did weather maps, and we would enter all of these conditions from around the country and from the Pacific. One of our other chores at night was to plot trans-Pacific flights from San Diego to Hawaii, and we would plot their fuel consumption so that you could plot a point of no return—they would get so far and they couldn't make it on what fuel they had left, and they had to come back to San Diego.

Another thing, during the course of being at North Island, it became Navy Weather Central. Originally it was just a weather station, and then it became Navy Weather Central and it was a very large, much larger operation, and it took over a larger portion of the base. There was an air group attached to it so that the pilots could come in and out and had a place to crash for a while. And telephones, pay telephone in the corner so they could call up to L.A. to tell them that they're on their way home, for instance. Tyrone Power did this frequently, with the French, married to Annabelle at that time. He would come in and make his calls up to L.A.

There was also one of the Marine pilots who used to come in and out with a team, a pilot that at that time was rather well noticed, too, because of his accomplishments. A lot of Marine pilots took the Naval Corsairs, there were a lot of small auxiliary air bases around North Island that were Marine air bases, like West Central and some of the others, some of the other ones out in the desert.

T: So a lot of planes coming and going?

P: Yes, we also had Australian pilots that were there. They would come over to Conair, Consolidated Aircraft, the manufacturer of, they made the PB4Y [Catalina aircraft]. So they would be stationed there. There were a lot of different kinds of people.

(A, 388)

T: How many women worked there at North Island?

P: I wouldn't have any idea. Now in our office, there were six of us at first, but by the time I left there were more. We had separate quarters because we did work a full schedule around the clock and didn't conform to regular hours, like on eight, off

eight or anything like that. It would just be around the clock, so we had a separate part of the barracks that was ours. Before I left there were a couple of other women who had been assigned there. I don't really recall where their quarters were because I know there was room for only six of us, we had our own facilities and the briefing room was down on the end, kind of removed from the regular routine of the barracks. There were a lot of aircraft mechanics, women aircraft mechanics, and there were every grade imaginable.

T: Your barracks was all women, right?

P: Yes, right, no co-ed!

T: You saw women doing a number of different jobs. You mentioned airline mechanics—what else?

P: Well, in our office we had a yeoman, and then we had three female officer meteorologists.

T: Were your officers both male and female for the year and a half that you were there?

P: Yes, but I mean the ones that worked in the office doing the same things that the men were. I mean they were not assigned to the women.

T: So they would assign men or women to whatever job?

P: Whatever, yes. And it was interesting that one of the men that was, one of the male officers, the ones that doled out the discretionary travel pay was a mustang. A mustang is an enlisted man who has been made an officer. This fellow, he got a battlefield commission, stationed in the Aleutians, and he and about five of his men that he worked with all got upgrades and raised in ranks, and he was made an officer. So he was our mustang.

T: He was treated differently then, or treated other people differently?

P: Yes, well maybe in a way. In peacetime it would definitely be a different kind of treatment. If you're an academy man it's a lot different from being an enlisted man who's come through the ranks. But there are a lot of men who have done this, Medal of Honor winners, you know for instance. Certainly he can't carry as much weight as an academy man.

T: Now your work schedule was a bit different you said than some others. You worked, how long were your shift that you were actually at your job?

P: Well, generally eight hours, and it is kind of traditional in the Navy – eight on, eight off, or something to that effect, but you don't do that generally on the shore

assignment. So I don't really recall how we did it especially, but we did it, you know you could work the schedule so that there would always be coverage for each, for various things. It was, like I say, when you're Navy Weather Central, you were a large contingent. Six women and then the rest of the complement were men.

T: And how many was that?

P: I would say another eight to ten.

T: Were the relations between the men and women, enlisted people in your division, fairly good?

P: I think so, yes, very much so.

T: The men didn't conceive of themselves as different or better because they were men?

P: No, oh no, really never. I mentioned before going back and forth on the ferry on the nickel snatcher, now the nickel snatcher was just a little passenger boat that used to go back and forth between North Island and the city, and frequently there would be sailors on there who maybe had had a very good time ashore (*laughs*). We never really were bothered by any of them, I can't really say that we were ever harassed or they made lewd or snide remarks. I don't know what the reason for it was, I think maybe something in your own demeanor maybe, I don't really know. But I can't honestly say that I ever felt inferior or looked down upon.

T: The shifts that you worked – did this leave time for liberty on evenings or weekends?

P: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact you frequently would have seventy two hours, and when you would have that three days you would maybe go up to L.A. Most likely what you would do, you would always be able to get a flight up, and we'd probably take the train back.

T: Why is that?

P: Well, because we wouldn't have connections at the base.

T: At your own base you would have connections?

P: Right, at our own base we would have somebody going up to L.A., so we would get a flight up there. After Orv and I were married in '45 and Orv was up in San Francisco waiting for assignment, I got a flight up to Alameda [Oakland] with a friend of mine, and we both went up. That's my war story, the one when we went up to Alameda, or San Francisco, we went up in an FNJ [aircraft], five passenger. Well, one of the passengers was Vice-Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf, who had just come back

from overseas. Oldendorf was a vice-admiral by the time he flew with us, so there was my girlfriend and I, we were going up to San Francisco and the plane was going there, they were going to go into Alameda. On the way up there was an ensign flying the plane, and he lost his way and we ended up at a little naval air station down at the end of the Bay called Crow's Landing. When we got down that ensign just said, "Ah, we finally got down." So we got into San Francisco late, but we got there.
(laughs)

T: So you got there, and had he not been on board...

P: Oh yeah, we would have stayed in Crow's Landing! *(laughs)* I wouldn't have gotten back to San Diego in seventy-two hours, I don't think!

T: Probably not. What about when you went on liberty or on leave, did you often go out by yourself or with a group?

(A, 486)

P: Oh no, when we would go up to L.A., at least two of us, we'd go together. And mostly because only two of us could off at the same time.

T: Right, because you had to keep it staffed?

P: Right, right, so that we wouldn't all have the same hours, so we would usually try to get two of us to be able to go up to L.A. I only remember going up to L.A. once by myself and it was I needed a new uniform and I figured I'd just go up to L.A. I don't know why, because we had uniforms there in San Diego, but I went up there.

T: Did you go out in the evenings in San Diego sometimes as well?

P: Oh, sure. Sure, one of my favorite spots was, it's not there any longer, they moved because of a relocation, but it's called "Red Sails" and it was just a real charming little place, right on the dock. Take the nickel snatcher and you're right there. Then you would get on the street car there at the dock and take it to downtown San Diego. There was a USO Club in town that was fun to go and dance.

T: Was that a pretty popular place?

P: Yes, and we had things in the town, you always kind of hated to be caught downtown at noon, though, because they would play the Star Spangled Banner and wherever you were you were you had to come to attention. We were trying not be out on the street at 12:00, at noon.

T: So if you were in a restaurant, or in a store you didn't have to?

P: No, no. But if you were on the street, and they would play this at noon every day. It was called the Plaza then, now it's a big shopping complex in San Diego.

T: You didn't have leave but a couple times, is that what you said?

P: No, I only had the one, and it was because I didn't choose to take it, I was waiting for Orv to hopefully sometime come home. When he did, see I was there only about a year at that time, less two years, I'd say about 18 months that I was there, I guess. But I hadn't taken any leave.

T: None at all?

P: My friends had, my friends had.

T: So you had a number of days built up.

P: Yeah, it was the usual two weeks leave and then travel time, they started giving travel time. Orv came home with the *Ward* in January '43 and he didn't get travel time, so his fifteen day leave was taken up by train travel back and forth from a base in Washington, I think it was Bremerton, to St. Paul. It was something like three days each way, or something like that. That's almost half of the fifteen days.

T: That's six out of fifteen, just sitting on a train. Pat, let me switch gears here. Was there a particular person who made a positive impact on you, someone you looked up to when you were in the service?

P: Well, I mentioned my friend very often, of the six of us there was one person that I was particularly attached to, that I was friendly with, she was from Vermont. Over the years we talked back and forth on the phone just as if we were still seeing each other every day. She was a little bit older than I was, she'd taught school for a couple of years in a little country school in Vermont. She was really the one that I was closest to. The other ones I was with were all, also very friendly, very nice, very good friends. We became good friends. Two of the girls that I was with, we were originally sent to San Diego together with, were Jewish, and I had never had any kind of an interaction with Jewish people before, so it was very interesting, very positive with the two of them.

T: What do you think, did you stay in contact with other people that you met in the Navy, after the war was over?

P: I'm afraid not. I'm a real poor correspondent. I would keep in touch with people through Kay, my friend Katherine. She would be the one, because she kept in contact with everybody. She kept me posted on everybody's doings and whatever.

T: Were there ever any kind of unit reunions that were held?

P: No, and I keep looking, it's probably way too far, we should have had a reunion of the demographers at least, because this is the one that really was the focus for all the services and whatever. I don't know, we just never, we always used to say when we were there, there was a nightclub kind of place called Sunset, and we'd go in there at night, once in a while, and we would say, "Well, this is where we'll have our reunion." And Orv and I were there about ten years ago I guess. The Sunset is still there, but it's very different.

T: Now when were you and Orv married?

P: January of 1945.

T: You were married back here in St. Paul, so he had leave and you had leave?

P: Yes, we both had leave at the same time. I had gotten home to St. Paul before he did because I got a flight, so I was home to greet him in Union Depot when he came in. We were home, I'm trying to think how long we were home, and we decided that we might as well get married.

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 000.

T: This is side B of the tape with Pat Ethier, on the 8th of October, 2001. So the decision to get married was a kind of a sudden one?

P: Yes, we got home and we were, it was a Saturday, and we decided that we would get married. This was Saturday; we were married on the following Wednesday. We're both Catholic, so we had to go out and talk to the priest about this. We had to get a dispensation from the church to get married without the customary three Sundays of banns. And we had to get a waiver of the waiting period at the county office. Well, then the soonest we could get married then was that Wednesday. We got all that done, somehow we got all that done, so we got married!

I don't even recall how many days we had at home. We had a reception, but we just had family of course, that's all that was there at my sister-in-law's place [on Goodrich Avenue in St. Paul]. My brother was in the service, but she had the house and we had a reception there with family. Orv and I went to the Saint Paul Hotel that night after the wedding, and we figured we could stay there until we were going to go back to San Diego. But my sister-in-law said, "Well, why do that? You take the house here, and I'll move down with your mom and dad." (*laughs*) So we stayed in her house until we went back.

I remember the night before we left, Orv having a party with the rest of the – there were the guys from the ship, none of whom had been asked to come to the wedding – they were all at the house that night before we had to leave, and of course they still had some leave left. Orv still had some leave, too, because he had thirty days survivor's leave they called it, because he had been on the *Ward* when it was sunk in the Pacific in December '44. I remember having to iron shirts and whatever that night to get ready to go back to San Diego. And they're partying! (*laughs*)

We went back to San Diego on the train. When we got back to San Diego, my friend had gotten us a room at the US Grand Hotel, right across from the plaza where they did the Star Spangled Banner every day. So we stayed at this, but you could only stay five days at a hotel in those days—that rule would prevent people from living in hotels, and there was no place to rent, anyplace. We happened to run into one of Orv's shipmates on the street and we were giving him our problems about not being able to find another hotel, since we had the leave the Grand, and he said, "I got a room. Take my room." And he handed us the key. So we got his five days, and after those five days then Orv had to leave to go back. He went back to San Francisco, and was then transferred to Mayport Naval Air Station [Florida], but in the mean time he got travel time between San Francisco and Mayport, so he came down to San Diego and we had, I suppose we had maybe five days that he had, and then he got a flight to Mayport.

T: So he was able to spend some extra time in San Diego.

P: Yeah, he was able to get a flight from there, from Treasure Island. He was on a B-25, I think it was. And it was, they were all working on peak per diem, you know, so they weren't in any hurry to get anyplace. *(laughs)*

T: How long did it take him to get from San Diego to Mayport?

P: I don't remember, but he got there on time, that time. When we went down to Mayport in May, our car broke down in Hawkinsville, Georgia. We had to take a bus from there and he was over leave when he got in that time.

T: Back at San Diego now, you were married. How did things change for you now that you were a married woman in your office?

P: Not a great deal of difference. I remember one of the fellows, when I was going to go home on leave, said, when he saw that I was ready to go home, he said, "Marry that guy while you're there!"

T: Had you thought about getting married before you went back, really?

P: No, not really. So much depended on what would happen, or what was going to happen with him, and of course we didn't know that he was going to go to Mayport. We thought he'd maybe get stationed in San Diego, and that was what more or less made us decide that we would get married before we went back, you know, because we wanted to be married at home, and we figured if he was stationed in San Diego.

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T: So you thought he might be, at that point?

P: We had no idea he'd be going to the east coast, absolutely none.

T: When did he find that out?

P: Well, not until we went back after we were married.

T: Then they told him he'd be stationed at Mayport?

P: Right.

T: So you were destined to be in San Diego and he was going to be in Florida?

P: Yes. Right.

T: Your job didn't change though, at all?

P: No, no, not at all.

T: So you stayed in the same position?

P: The only thing is when I went up to Los Angeles with friends, for instance, I would stand in line at May Company to buy sheets. *(laughs)*

T: *(laughing)* So certain things changed, didn't they?

P: Yes. We had to stand in line for everything. There were shortages of everything, so when you saw a line forming you got in it, and then found out what it was for.

T: Then you could decide whether you wanted those things or not!

P: Yes, yes.

T: So you remember standing in line for rationed goods?

P: Oh yes. Some things were not rationed, but they were in such short supply that if they were available you had to be at the right place at the right time.

T: Buy now and think later whether you need them, in a sense?

P: Yes. And for other things, like shoes, we still got ration tickets for shoes.

T: Even as WAVES?

P: Oh, yes. Yes, because we bought those on the open market.

T: Did the men buy their shoes on the open market, too?

P: They got a uniform, the Navy, you got a uniform allowance.

T: And you had to buy your own stuff with it?

P: You had to buy your own things. You would buy them, generally, at a retail establishment.

T: There must have been places that specialized in military stuff. You mentioned uniform shops a bit ago.

P: Yes, especially in a Navy town. You had tailor shops lining up Broadway in San Diego. Men wouldn't wear government issue uniforms, they'd get tailor made.

T: Oh, because there was a whole bunch of them there?

P: Oh yes. And not only that, the government issue type, you would still buy those if you were going to buy uniforms, but they were heavy wool cloth. Tailor made, you would get gabardine. More comfortable to wear, and they'd be tailored with the bell bottoms. And they'd be tailored so they'd be form fitting.

T: And the military stuff was kind of one-size-fits-no-one, that kind of thing?

P: Yeah, right. But the women, to my knowledge, only would buy things from shops, like May Company had a uniform department.

T: So in regular department stores, you would have a uniform department.

P: Yes, uniform department, right.

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(brief discussion of travel, off topic of this interview)

T: How did you stay in touch with your family back here in St. Paul and with Orv when you were living in San Diego?

P: I mentioned before that I was a real poor correspondent.

T: That was true of back then too?

P: Yes, yes, frequently I would come in and there would be a note at the desk that I should call my mother *(laughs)*. Because I hadn't written. So then I would do that. But short letters back and forth, it was the only option you had, really. Telephone calls, at that time, you didn't feel as free to make them as you do now. You know, it's nothing now picking up the phone and calling. Then it was rather, you know I remember once my brother came through San Diego and went up to L.A. and then

wanted him to call his wife, and it was maybe \$20. And it was a chunk of money, you know. You just had a different feeling about things. We never were that affluent as kids that we ever got into that mindset that you had this, that money was that available.

T: Interesting. Did you get more letters than you sent, Pat?

P: Probably.

T: Did you hear from Orv?

P: Yeah, I heard from him, I've got those all tied up someplace.

T: So he wrote more frequently than you?

P: No, I wouldn't say that! *(laughing)*

T: Now you were at North Island until May '45, so when President Roosevelt died on the 12th of April, how did you and those around you react to that news?

P: Well, at first, that was probably more of a blow than Pearl Harbor, because by then you knew, you were in the midst of things, you know you could remember exactly where you were. I was in part of the Administration Building on the Island when I heard it first.

T: Was it announced, or did someone tell you?

P: Yeah, it was announced, yes, over the loud speaker on the, you know "Now hear this" type thing. And we were all in a state of shock wondering what, what was this man Harry S. Truman going to be able to do about this war situation? You never had the feeling that he was that much in touch with what was going on, because Roosevelt was one of those "I'll take care of it" hands-on types.

T: Were you saddened or just surprised or?

P: Oh, very saddened. After all the first time I had voted, in '44, I had voted for him. This was my first election, you know, and besides being apprehensive about what was going to happen, there was a feeling that he was so very, that he really had charge of things, and you didn't really know how things were going to come out of that.

T: Were reactions of those people around you similar, or did they differ?

P: We all had that same feeling. I don't know, I guess maybe we weren't as politically aware then, but I think we were, yeah I think everybody, more or less, had

this feeling of sadness and really kind of concerned about what the future would hold.

T: Less than a month later, of course, the future held the surrender of Germany, V-E Day, May the 8th. What do you remember about V-E Day?

P: I was home by then, of course. As a matter of fact, we were down in Florida, at Mayport. And that was a strange situation down there. Mayport, at that time when the Navy base was built, they put the town so that you came in to one part of the town, and there was Navy here, and the rest of the town sat over on this side of the navy families, so there was no unity in the town itself. When we first went down there, I stayed, well Orv was over leave and confined to the base, and I was at the sister of a fellow that had been on the ship with him, he was in the Marine Corps, and his sister lived there.

It was, to me, very primitive living. They had no plumbing in this house, it was just awful. Anyway, finally Orv got to somebody who finally realized that he was over leave not of his own doing and he was released. So we got a place in town, on the other part of town. It was a lovely home, it was on one of the nicest in town, but it was rented by someone, and the owner did not live there. So we had the second floor, but the run of the house on the first floor.

It was an interesting place, Mayport, but there was no cohesiveness in the town particularly, what there was, there was mostly Navy people at that point. There was a part of town, and of course it was very segregated, also which I wasn't used to, and at the one end of town there was a, it was a fish fertilizer, they made fertilizer out of fish and they were all either black or, strangely enough, North Carolinians, come down to work those jobs.

T: Whites from Carolina?

P: Yes, that was strange. So in Mayport you never had a feeling of belonging or cohesiveness with the town itself.

T: Did that impact any kind of celebration on V-E Day, or later on V-J Day?

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P: No, there was no central gathering place, really, for it. As a matter of fact, on V-J Day, our car was finally so-called fixed, and we're setting out for Jacksonville Beach, which was close by, because that's where things would really be happening. We were on our way there, and we were hit by a man who had already been celebrating, and we had to limp back to Mayport. So that was V-J Day for us. We never got in on any of the jubilation at all! *(laughter)*

T: How about the mood of people that you came into contact with?

P: Well, of course, as soon as V-J Day happened the services announced a "point

plan” for men to be able to get out of the service, for anybody to get out of the service, and it depended upon your length of time in the service, and overseas points and whatever. So Orv had enough points immediately.

T: Oh, he must have—he had been in since before Pearl Harbor.

P: Like immediately, but they kept after him to stay on. They said, “We’ll give you chief, we’ll give you this, we’ll give you that” – because he hadn’t made chief yet – “if you’ll stay on for six months.” Well, we had a baby about to be born, and I’m was not going to have one of the locals deliver my baby. I told Orv, I’m going to go home!

T: So you were anxious to leave?

P: Yes, so it was up to him, but I came home, I flew home, before him. It was like September when I came home, and he got out the first of October. So he stayed on to what his enlistment date was, really, but he could have gotten out a little bit sooner if he had really pushed it. But it was the first of October.

T: It was clear to him though that you, in any case, were going back to St. Paul.

P: Yes.

T: And that impacted his decision to get out pretty soon?

P: Yes, we didn’t have any kind of living conditions that would have been... We would have had a house because people would have gone from town, and there would have been places available. But that part of it didn’t enter my mind.

T: He’d been in the Navy, by now, for almost five years?

P: Almost five years.

T: Was he ready for a change then, too, to get out?

P: Yeah, I think so, I think he was ready to. Like I said, it probably wasn’t the smartest thing we ever did to get married, because the war was still on, but I think it had changed our outlook on things enough so that we thought we should get back to St. Paul.

T: Could you say if you and Orv, if you hadn’t been married, or hadn’t met each other, do you think Orv might have stayed with the Navy?

P: I think he would have stayed for that six months that they had asked him to.

T: Because he would have got chief for that?

P: Yes, and that might have been enough for him, if he had gotten chief, that he never would had to go to Korea.

T: Why's that?

P: They never recalled any chiefs from St. Paul in his rank. His cousin was a machinist mate chief, he never got any call.

T: So Orv was in the reserves after the war.

P: Yes, he was in reserves after the war. He wasn't at first, he was discharged, but then they started to reorganize the reserve units, and kept badgering us to join, to re-join.

T: And he got called to Korea then, in 1950?

P: Yeah, 1950. By then his enlistment in the reserves had expired, but they had extended everybody a year, so he had to serve another year even though his enlistment had already expired.

T: How did that work?

P: That was just like being, during the war, you served, when you enlisted you served for the duration, then six months.

T: So how long was he active duty in Korea?

P: Just a year, until his year was up, and then he came home. But he got chief in the meantime, he had chief already in the works when he got called.

T: Well, after all those years in the Navy and in the war, and then to have to go back to Korea.

P: And he was right on a destroyer. Immediately, on a destroyer.

T: Boy, déjà vu! He spent over three years on the *Ward* during World War II, too, another destroyer. Pat, when you came back to St. Paul, it was what, September of 1945.

P: Yes.

T: You were gone, with the exception of a little bit of leave, you'd been gone for over two years.

P: Over two years, just a little bit over two years.

T: How did life in St. Paul change, do you feel, as a result of the war?

P: As a result of the war? I know there was no housing available, of course; it was very difficult to find a place to live. We were able to sublease an apartment from a friend of my mother's. Another friend of ours, who was still in the Navy, both his parents had died and he was an only child, and he had a house, and we asked if we could live in it until he got out of the Navy. So we did that, but then immediately started to look for a house to buy, and when you would find something to buy, you had to evict the people who were in it if they were renters.

For the most part that was what kind of housing was available, places that were for rent. Anyway, we did find a house, and couldn't get into it; we bought it in January after our anniversary, and moved into it in May '46. We couldn't get into it until that time. So we had a very small house that we bought in St. Paul. And it was hard because, you asked how was it different in St. Paul, there were many returning people, but jobs were not there—all the military things, all the war types of industries had crashed, so there wasn't an awful lot of work available. Orv went back to a job that he had had right out of high school, it was in a packing plant as a maintenance man, but he went back there.

His dad was in the steam fitting business, and wanted him to come in with him, but he couldn't get materials right away, so he stayed on at Superior Packing until the following year, and then he went into business with his dad. They worked there, he worked there with his dad until '49 when they needed gas inspectors in St. Paul, and they needed experienced men to do that, so he went to work for the city, and stayed there. Because, again, in the Korean War, materials started getting hard to get again, and by that time his brother had come into the business, so it was a good opportunity then for Orv to take another job and leave the other one for his brother.

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T: Did he retire from that job then, or from a government job then?

P: He retired from the city of St. Paul. He was a gas piping inspector, heating and piping inspector.

T: So you remember adequate housing being hard to find...

P: Oh, yes, very hard to find.

T: ...and jobs being difficult.

P: To try to find a place to rent was almost impossible, and so we felt we had enough money to buy a house if we could find one.

T: IF you could find one.

P: You'd see an ad in the paper in the morning, and when we did find the one that we did, the house was advertised in the morning paper—there was a morning and evening paper, and this was in the morning paper—and I saw it. Orv came, and I said, "It's going to be open at 4:30, but we've got to get there before." We were the first ones there, and we went up to the attic to discuss whether or not we thought we should buy it. We came back downstairs, and there were two more couples there looking at the house. Now we had already given the real estate man earnest money, and he took it. Then this other fellow came up to him, but he said, "I've already taken earnest money from this couple." He says to the real estate agent, "What are you asking for it?" – now, are you ready for this? – "\$5000," he says. We had offered him \$4500. The man said, "Well, I need a house for my son, and I'll give you that in cash right now!" Of course our eyes pop out, you know, and the real estate agent says, "No, I've already accepted this earnest money." I've always had the greatest deal of respect for this real estate man, because we had offered him less even. Anyway, that was how it was. You had to be there ahead of the crowd to even find a house that would be anywhere near what you could afford to pay for it.

T: Regardless of what it was, if you could get it, it sounds like you took it.

P: Right, right.

T: Now you had the baby in November, but you had been discharged in May. What was your initial reaction to being out of the military, being a civilian again?

P: You know we were kind of in a state of flux, because right away Orv came home on leave, we moved down to Mayport, we were still more or less military—even though I wasn't in the military, Orv still was. So we were still kind of involved in that part, kind of a good transition point for me, I think, to still have sort of a military connection, but not be totally civilian yet. So really my first dealing with this is after we got home and both of us got home before the baby was born. So I don't know that there was ever any big transition point, Orv had a job to go back to, and so we didn't have that problem that so many had who had gone into the service right out of high school and didn't have any connections for a job. A lot of them went back to school, a lot of them mostly because they didn't have anything else to do, they didn't know what else to do.

T: Pat, once you took your uniform off and left the Navy, would you say that you missed it?

P: Yeah, I kind of missed being with friends, living with women, that was interesting. I wouldn't say that I missed it all that much, though. College was more something I missed. I finished two years at St. Catherine's, and I didn't really have the wherewithal to stay in school with the tuition paid. It's hard to believe that now, but anyway, I often thought I should have gone back to school. But by that time of course, after the war and married, I had a baby, I couldn't. So, I had the feeling that

this two years of my life in the Navy were probably more educational than anything I would have ever gotten in college.

T: Real life experience?

P: Yes, I really had that feeling. I don't know whether I was just trying to talk myself out of being annoyed with myself for not staying in school, or whether it was just that I had a great experience, and it was. I really had an opportunity to meet people from other parts of the country whose backgrounds were different from mine, all around.

T: Yeah, you had positive things to say about it, several different times in the conversation.

P: Yes, there were a lot of women who came into the Navy who went back home because they couldn't hack it. They didn't like this whole regimentation, they couldn't adapt to living with women like this, two women to a room. Yeah, there were quite a few. As a matter of fact, it wasn't only true with women of course, it was true with men. When I was in San Diego, when I was at North Island, every night we had a planeload that that would leave San Diego and would file a flight plan going to the naval hospital in Dallas. Most of them were going from boot camps or from Army training, Marine training. They couldn't hack the regimentation of boot camp.

T: So they sent them to a place in Dallas?

P: Yeah. Every single night there were planes that went out. Now some of those were war casualties, yes, but the majority were just guys who couldn't handle it.

T: That's interesting. Pat, I wanted to ask about the atomic bombs. At the time, in August '45, did you feel the US government was correct to use atomic bombs on Japan?

P: Yes. I saw a little notation not so long ago that said "No Pearl Harbor, No Hiroshima" and I think that says it all. We were attacked, it was unnecessary or it was brutal to do what they did, of course in light of what's happened today [reference to events of 11 September 2001], that's nothing, I guess, but it was... and I'm not saying that in a vengeful way, but only that it saved a lot of lives after it had been dropped, you know. When you think, we would have ultimately invaded Japan, they would have lost as many perhaps, maybe not, not as, with the side-effects of the atomic bomb, there wouldn't be that kind of, but there would have been life lost. Many of them, both to us and to Japan. So it's part a mathematical question, and I think it was worthwhile doing it, yes. And I really feel that it was one way to end it all.

T: How have your thoughts, or your feelings, on this subject changed since 1945?

P: I don't feel that they have changed on this subject. I think it has introduced a terrible thing into our lives, a fear that some other country is going to, has already achieved the capability to do the same thing.

T: Right. To wrap up with, Pat, a couple of the bigger questions: What did the war mean for you personally, at the time?

P: Well, it changed everybody's outlook on life. Like I said, I was in school at St. Catherine's and I felt, what's the point? There must be something better that I can be doing to hasten the end of the war. Certainly that was your biggest goal, for it all to be over. It disrupted and changed everybody's life. You weren't able to plan for the future, anything in the future, we never had any conception that it was going to last as long as it did—you never thought four years! You couldn't conceive of that.

T: So how do you reflect on the war now, when you look back fifty-seven years later?

P: Well, I guess that's the way it does affect me now, is that it changed everybody's life. Had I not joined the Navy would I have ever gone away from St. Paul? I don't know. You know, would I have ever gone away, would I have gone someplace else? I don't know what the outcome would have been without the war; that really changed things. Of course, there's been so much progress in other, we call it progress always, in other facets of our lives. I guess it was such a big part of our lives, you just never conceived of it ever having been any different because that was it, that was the way it was.

T: Anything you wanted to add? That was the last question I wanted to ask.

P: I think I've talked about everything in my life (*laughs*).

T: Okay, then, thank you very much for the interview.

P: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW