

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH NANCY GODFREY

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kurt Piehler: This begins an interview with Mrs. Nancy P. Godfrey on February 14, 1997 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler ...

Barbara Tomblin: ... and Barbara Tomblin.

KP: Before we began the interview, we were discussing Clark. First, could you talk a bit about your parents, beginning with your father, because you mentioned your father had served in World War I and it was ...

Nancy Godfrey: Yes.

KP: It sounds like it was a fairly memorable experience for him.

NG: Well, he, you know, talked about it at length. I just remember there were always recurrent stories. ... He went to Auburn when it was a land grant college, so he was ... ROTC, or whatever they called it then. So he got a commission in the Signal Corps, I think, which at that time was mounted. They rode horses and he was the only one who knew how to handle a horse. [laughter] ... The things he told about was being in a camp in Texas, where it was cold, and they'd only issued people summer uniforms and that was the preparedness thing. ... From papers I found, he was discharged in 1918 or '19. I found his discharge papers, and so he wasn't in France long, but he went over, when ... What was that epidemic of?

BT: Flu?

KP: In 1919, the influenza epidemic.

NG: I remember him always saying that ... there were bodies piled up on the ship's deck like cordwood from influenza. ... Then he talked about one of his jobs escorting the wounded to the first aid tent. He said it was, you know, people standing in water. There was no place to lie down. This was in France, I've forgotten which part, but he would tell about being billeted in a French chateau. I don't think he strung any power lines, or did anything too military.

BT: He never said what he did particularly?

NG: I don't think he was in any sort of action, you know. He wasn't in the shooting war.

KP: It sounds like he, 'cause he had been trained as an officer ...

NG: Yes.

KP: It sounds like they didn't fully utilize his talents ...

NG: They probably didn't know what to do with his talents, but I think it was toward the end of the war, I've forgotten when.

KP: When he got over?

NG: Yes.

BT: That could be too ...

NG: Yes, I could pin it down, but he was, Daddy was from a German background. All his ancestors were German. I came across a letter of his mother's, written during World War II to somebody, talking about their last trip to ... Now, she was American-born. Her father was German-born, his father was German-born, and they all settled in the South. ... He was born in Memphis, someplace in Tennessee, and then they seemed to have moved to Birmingham. ... He told about seeing the troops marching through Birmingham on the way to wherever you embarked for the Spanish-American War ...

BT: Oh, yes. You told me.

NG: ... Cuba, and he was a boy then. ... But I don't think he was the military type. ... He said that, it was either his father or grandfather had to get out of Germany because he criticized the Kaiser, and I thought that was exciting 'cause I didn't know there were any rebels in our family at all, that they were all Republicans who never criticized the government. [laughter] He never spoke about his father, except to say that his father sang in amateur opera, apparently had a good voice. That was the musical side of the family. ... His grandfather, his mother's father, was a doctor who was in the Civil War and got conscripted. All the doctors got conscripted and then they didn't get paid, so they marched on Washington to claim their back pay, but that's the only thing.

KP: So your father's family went pretty far back ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... in the United States.

NG: Yes.

KP: So your father didn't speak German, did he?

NG: No, he knew very little.

BT: Yes, I wondered about that.

NG: He said they spoke it at home, but he didn't remember much. ... I don't think they spoke it a lot at home, and I don't know whether he could even understand it.

KP: Did his family ever feel any ambivalence about World War I, being German-Americans?

NG: Probably. I don't remember whether he said he had cousins, or anyone over there. If he did, he may not have known about it. But this letter, I mentioned, from my grandmother said they had ... I don't know whether it was apropos, but they had apparently traveled in Germany and it must have been before World War II, and, what, I've forgotten even what part of Germany. "It was such a beautiful, beautiful country," and she referred to the wonderful German people, and so it was a kind of wistfulness about your heritage ... She was glad she saw it then while it was still beautiful and untouched. ... Her family was from the part of Germany where they kept turning over back and forth. ... It was around Metz, you know.

KP: Alsace-Lorraine area.

NG: Yes. Her father was educated at the University of whatever, in Vienna. He went to medical school there.

BT: Wow.

NG: So one of our nephews was going to visit somebody in Austria, stopped by the university to see if he could find ... Hey, let's see, what was the name? It's wasn't Petersen, well, whatever. But they said they had long ago buried those archives. [laughter] But Daddy was always interested in history and what happened to the, you know, the Turks coming into, I think it was Austria. ... He always, you know, talked a lot about things that he remembered and everything he ever read, so he was quite interested in history. My mother's background was, she always said she was Scotch-Irish-Dutch. She was from Pawnee, Illinois, and she was born in 1898 and grew up there in a Presbyterian Church. ... You couldn't get anymore narrow, I guess, and was sort of, fled to Washington, DC during World War I to become a ...

KP: She was a secretary in the government.

NG: Yes.

BT: That's what you were talking about.

NG: ... I'd come across her applications for jobs, you know, at that age, she must have been, I figured twenty. ... I came across in her scrapbook this picture of a young woman of the times looking very patriotic and militant going off. I've forgotten what the label was, but everything was really romanticized. My mother wrote notes that way the rest of her life. Everything was sort of happy and wonderful, and so we never learned about bad and sad.

KP: So your mother never raised you on any bad things and interpreted them. It sounds like your father talked about the darker sides of life.

NG: Yes, yes.

KP: But your mother always ...

NG: He was that way. He was the pessimist and Mother was ...

BT: Realistic.

NG: Yes, and I think it was sort of, you know, that was his nature, and he was reserved and quiet and ...

KP: Where your mother was the upbeat one who ...

NG: Yes, and I hear it to this day, my God, I come across people who say, "Oh, your mother was always so cheerful," but, you know, she wanted everybody to think everything was wonderful. ... I never found out that it wasn't until I got quite old. I think she always wanted to do something. I don't know whether it's exciting. At one point, she wanted to be in the circus and be an acrobat, 'cause she had a gym teacher who she really admired. But then, what she really liked was theatre, and she [did] a lot of, what would you call it, amateur theatre. ... We've come across some things indicating that she did some writing, 'cause on the list of things that she had to do, before I was born, she had this list of seventy-five things to do. It was March 24th, and one of them was, "write twenty-four scenarios." For what, I don't really know. But the interesting thing was, there was a list of things to take to the hospital for herself and for the baby.

BT: The practical side.

NG: But it didn't say for baby, it said for Billy, and it was the first time I ever knew that Mother wanted a boy, but she always liked boys.

BT: She never said, "Gee, I'm sorry you weren't a boy."

NG: She liked her son-in-laws, sons-in-law, and she liked her boy grandchildren. I don't think she disliked the others, but you could always see that preference for young males, even old males. When she was in her nursing home, she ...

KP: Your mother didn't have a son?

NG: No, no, just two girls.

KP: Just two girls. It sounds like she would have liked a son.

NG: It was hard to tell ...

KP: At the time, you didn't realize it, not until ...

NG: Never had a clue. It took me two weeks to recover from this great revelation that there was supposed to be a Billy. ... My husband's name is Bill, and somebody said, "Well, she got her Billy." [laughter] She always thought he was wonderful and that's probably why I married him, because she kept writing reports from the home front.

KP: Your mother, it sounds like she was a remarkable ...

BT: Yes.

KP: I mean, she worked as a secretary, but she also went to George Washington University.

NG: And she took night classes, and she lived in what they call a club house, you know, several girls live there and they all did various things and ...

KP: So she never finished, but she took night courses.

NG: One summer she went to, I think it was summer, she went to the Boston School of Expression. See, the theatre was what she really was interested in, so she did that. She did a lot of that stuff, and then she taught what was then called elocution.

KP: Where did she teach?

NG: You know, privately.

KP: Privately.

NG: And when I saw the ad for teaching, I never knew she had all these things in her. ... She did it in New York City, and we were living in Jersey by that time. She had students who were aspiring actors and their mothers were aspiring for them to be actors. [laughter] It's more like that. ... She eventually ended up writing a children's radio script as part of a Sunday morning children's program.

BT: Did she write it every week?

NG: It was every week for years.

BT: Amazing.

KP: For how many years? Was it into the '30s?

NG: Oh, she started in the '30s. Let's see, I don't do well with dates, except the Battle of Hastings.

KP: It was while you were growing up ...

NG: Yes. ... Then she got us into radio, and my sister and I are not sure whether we were volunteers or volunteered. [laughter] I found the letter, a speech, a talk Mother gave to some women's club, and it said, actually, it was about behind-the-scenes in radio. She had friends who were in radio in New York.

BT: In New York.

KP: Your mother's papers, you didn't throw them out.

NG: God, I'd never throw anything out.

KP: Oh, good. Have you thought of giving them to an archive or a library?

NG: Well, they're sort of odds and ends. A lot of them are her version. ... She spent a lot of years working as a children's librarian. That was her last career.

BT: Oh, her last career.

NG: So I saved all of those and I'll give them to the Rahway Library.

BT: Good, oh, yes, do it.

NG: ... They can throw it out. [laughter] Yes, a lot of the things are, I don't know that you'd ever say they were historical.

KP: Oh, no, the speeches would and if she had any radio scripts, those would be very useful.

BT: They would be very useful.

KP: Those would be very, very useful and any of the material regarding radio, 'cause that's probably the only copy that ever existed.

NG: Of what?

KP: Of the radio scripts, I bet you.

BT: That's a good point. They didn't tape 'em or anything.

KP: Yes.

NG: Oh, no?

KP: Yes, those scripts would be very helpful.

NG: I have the ones I was in, or pieces of them.

KP: Oh, those would be ...

NG: Mother saved everything.

KP: Oh, no, your mother's taping would be very useful for historians.

NG: ... She saved some of her scripts and she saved ones I was in. I haven't found any that my sister was in. My sister's seven years younger, but maybe they got sorted out and given to her. I'd have to ask her.

KP: Your mother sounds like she was very successful in the '30s.

NG: You mean successful for a woman?

BT: She had a job.

KP: She had a job, and it was a fairly, I mean, it's a fairly creative job writing radio scripts.

NG: Well, she was sort of self-employed. She did this, when I say self employed, it was ...

KP: She got paid by the script?

NG: Yes, fifteen dollars.

BT: She was like a screenwriter.

NG: ... It was, maybe, a ten minute segment of an hour program, and I have some of those ...

KP: Which network did she write scripts for, or which radio station?

NG: I've forgotten whether it was ... See, they had the red and the blue, and one was NBC and the other was ABC, I guess, but it was one of those.

KP: So it was the NBC networks that she wrote for.

NG: I don't think I threw out everything. I have some of the letters from the company lawyers. She was trying to make a book out of the story that she, the story that, let's see if I can finish the sentence, out of some of the scripts. ... Some of them ended up in book form, and it was called *The Adventures of Peter Pig*. It was one of those farm yard things with names. ... Then about the time they were going to launch into something, the company lawyers found out that Disney had already copyrighted the Peter Pig part, that name ... so they couldn't make television. They could do books or something, so it sort of petered out. ... I saved a lot of Mother's commentary, which was, we used to think it was the amplified version, but I think it was all real. It certainly was to her. She always had a very up idea of everything. Everything was wonderful.

BT: I wondered what she thought politically about women voting because ...

NG: Mother was ...

BT: ... she seemed to be such an active person.

NG: ... on the surface, she was, oh, what would you call it? Certainly not liberal, but she really was conservative. I mean, Mother was the kind of person that would talk about wanting to accept everybody, but she really had trouble when she had black help in to take care of Dad and it was sort of, you know, that two-sided. Look, where she grew up, I mean, they had two sides of the track, and so there was always ... I don't mean the pretense to be accepting, but I remember during the Civil Rights period, she said, "Well, I think it's all right for black people to, you know, have these things, and you can accept them when they bring themselves up to our level." ... I said, "Mother, your boss in the library, Ed Wright, is black. His family is. Half the people in Rahway are." ... She said, "Oh," so that was the end of comparative sociology. Some of my interests did not concur with Mother's, my political interests. She was always a little suspicious of ...

KP: Because she was a Republican through the '30s.

NG: Yes.

KP: So she was for Hoover and ...

NG: For all. Always a Republican, even on her absentee ballots. She told the woman who took care of her, "Just put Republican for everything." We said we were going to take away her absentee ballots.

BT: Did she have strong opinions about Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt?

NG: I don't remember too much about that.

BT: Well, if she did, you would have remembered her being so Republican through the '30s and '40s.

NG: She wasn't politically involved, she just had opinions. Daddy was interested in how the government worked and how the economy was and things like that. ... I remember Mother saying once, when you were asking about women's vote. I don't know that she ever noticed that she got the vote. She did vote, but she always said she was unhappy during the period of what she called "the bra burnings." ... What's the word ... people that age used?

KP: Women libbers?

NG: Yes, those women's libbers, and she said, "You know I've never had a problem. Your father's let me do anything I wanted." She did everything she wanted. I mean Daddy would ... never have objected.

KP: It sounds like the scriptwriting was fine by your father ...

NG: Oh, yes. They got along fine. They had mutual interests and separate interests.

KP: What were their mutual interests and what were their separate ones? I mean, the scriptwriting was clearly a separate.

NG: Well, around the house, they both liked to garden. Daddy did vegetables ... and Mother did flowers and built lily ponds and rock gardens. ... Our kids grew up next door. I could look out the window and watch my mother rolling rocks at seven o'clock in the morning before she went to work, and, you know, that doesn't exactly stir your ambition. She had different interests ... not just in her personality, but physically she was different, live wire. My sister said she was taught to be cheerful and not sound glum on the phone. So she said, "You notice, I always, how I sound," and it's true.

BT: So your sister took more after your mother actually than I think you did ...

NG: I think so. She wouldn't let you know that. Mother was just an individual, and we appreciate it now, but we understand more where we picked up some of our ...

KP: Rebelliousness.

NG: During the late '60s and '70s when the kids were all marching and stuff. I had two outlets and one was our two boys, who were in school then. I just thought it was wonderful, but I could only gaze from afar, 'cause I had never rebelled, I mean being the older of two.

KP: It seems like you almost enjoyed the fact that your kids were part of that rebellion.

NG: Oh, yes. I envied them, and I let them cut school to go to some demonstration at Brant Park.

KP: This is when he'd been at one of his protests.

NG: Yes, there was a meeting in Brant Park in New York.

KP: Was it a anti-Vietnam War?

NG: Well, let's see, he's forty-three, or something like that, so it was about that time, 'cause he managed to avoid getting drafted, but then so did his brother. ... Nobody wanted to be in that war.

KP: Your mother did elocution and wrote radio scripts into the '30s. When did the scripts stop? When did she stop doing radio work?

NG: Probably when my sister was in high school and she started working part-time as a children's librarian and became full-time.

KP: Was that in the 1950s?

NG: Yes, I guess about then.

KP: So that was a fairly long time to be involved in radio. It almost sounds like she got caught up with radio's relative decline towards television.

NG: There wasn't television when I was doing radio. My sister may have gotten into it, I don't know. ... See, Mother was involved in radio in Washington, 'cause I came across some things from WRC. There's a booklet. It's really interesting, but I don't know who to give it to see.

KP: The Special Collections would like all your mother's papers, anything you didn't want to keep. Actually, one of my interns will give you a call and talk to you about it.

NG: That's what I did for my high school paper. I had to write a paper of the history of radio and the unfortunate part is that I did it in verse. ... I read it and I thought I should throw it away. But it was really hard to find any historical material, and I used to go to the NBC library. There wasn't really too much there. I went to a school, a high school, professional children in New York City, so all my friends were either in the theater, did modeling, or ballet, not all of them. Then I went back and I taught school there. But it has nothing to do with the war, except I didn't like what I was doing when I got out of the Navy, so I taught school.

KP: Just going back a little bit more, it sounds like your mother is a very professional and successful woman. She wrote for radio, she was a children's librarian, she had worked as a government secretary, and your father had a tougher time, it sounds like.

NG: Well, Daddy was trained as an electrical engineer, and he worked for Western Electric, he worked for RCA. When we lived in Camden, he worked for the, what did they call it before RCA, the something Victrola Company, with the little dog in the thing.

KP: Oh, yes.

NG: ... I guess he worked in Philly ... or Camden. That's where their plant was, and he did that and then he worked for Western Electric in Kearny, and then he worked for Western Electric in Baltimore. When we lived there, all of these things fell through. So when we came back up here I don't think he had a job and their bank had gone belly up, so they didn't have a lot of money.

KP: Did your parents lose a lot in a bank failure?

NG: Well, see, we never talked about things, so I simply did not know.

KP: So there's a real air of mystery, exactly. I guess, one question even back a little farther, how did your parents meet? It sounds like they came to this area, at least New Jersey, because of your father's work.

NG: Yes.

KP: Why did they come to New Jersey?

NG: Well, they met in Washington, DC. Mother has a picture of the place at Rock Creek Park where they met and they got engaged. ... They met at a friend's house, who introduced them because they thought that they would be a good pair. So I grew up with, you know, their children, or their son, because we'd go and visit. We left Washington when I was about three, I think, and went to California for Daddy's health, believe it or not. In those days, it was less something. We stayed out there for several years, or a couple of years, and then came back East. So they met, and I think they were both working for the government and I have a picture of the wedding. Someplace there's a guest list, too. ... Then I was born in Washington a few years later. I think they were married in '19, 1920, something, I was born in '24. So there's most of the history then ... I was going to say, clothed in myth. You know, Mother always had a fantasy, she'd embellish things. She just saw things through different eyes, and people wrote things down differently. I have a letter from her friend. These were grown women, or, at least were young women whose talk about coy and romantic. These are women I knew when they grew up and it was sort of like giggly girls. ... It was very much like the fiction of the time, of which I don't know too much about, but you say, "This is right out of a book," you know, and it's really interesting. So they lived in Washington, and then they never went back there to live.

KP: It sounds like they came up because your father got work with Victrola-RCA.

NG: Yes, yes.

BT: They came to Camden.

NG: Well, after they came back from California ...

KP: What had they done in California? What happened in California?

NG: He, well, poor Daddy. I think he tried to sell cars. He's not a salesman at heart, and maybe there wasn't much employment then. ... I lived with my grandmother, while Mother worked in Pasadena for Vroman's Bookstore, where she told me, they had a copy of *Ulysses* under the counter, and I don't know that she ever read it. I tried to read it, and I didn't understand it. ... They had a house at one time, and she, among other things, did, she tutored a retarded neighbor boy, until he tried to choke her one day, and so Dad said, "We won't do that." But, apparently, she had several jobs, because I found a letter that she wrote about applying and her credentials looked good and I know she didn't lie about them. I think, they were well written letters. She was a very articulate person, and I think she was born that way. ... My father was, he was just quiet and reserved, not grumpy, just quiet and reserved ...

KP: It sounds like your father, at least in the wartime experience, he had seen some terrible things. It sounds like he'd really seen some things that were terrible and you think your mother just could have a more upbeat personality because she didn't see dead people stacked as cordwood.

NG: I think she was born with an upbeat personality. I'm convinced in watching five children that they're born with the way they are.

KP: Yes, that ...

NG: ... They're that way when they're forty ...

BT: I do think it's a personality thing.

NG: ... All the letters Mother had and the things she told me, and she'd tell me about sweethearts in Pawnee, Illinois, and who she had a crush on, and things they did ... in high school, and she won the declamation contest.

KP: Yes.

NG: I have a medal. Somebody gave me her medal when she won first prize. She was always into things. ... But the interesting thing is as far as, you know, I think I saw my grandparents, her parents, once that I recall, and they stayed in Illinois and I would hear snippets about them. At one time, her brother married and we would write Christmas cards. But you know who really knows what went on in my mother's life is the lady who took care of her the last five years in her home. She would say, "Did your mother ever tell you about this and that?" ... It helped me to have a greater understanding of a life that was not always beautiful. I'm so glad she had somebody to tell it to. She obviously couldn't tell us. I thought that was interesting.

BT: She felt safe that she could, and maybe when you ...

NG: Old people babble on to somebody they trust.

KP: From the woman who took care of you, you said you had gotten some insights. What did your mother ...

NG: ... She took care of Mother.

KP: Did the person taking care of your mother tell you anything about her youth?

NG: Yes.

KP: What about?

NG: Apparently, Mother had a sister. I mean, my mother told me that she had an older sister who died in childbirth. Now, I don't know whether that's true, but, or she must have died from something, because I never heard of her after. But Helene, the keeper, said, "You know, your mother said she had this older sister who got pregnant, and she tried to take, she swallowed lye I think to abort and her mother had to give her warm milk and something." So I've forgotten whether the sister went away and had the baby, or what, but I never knew about this sister. ... My mother

would occasionally tell me about this boy she played with and they went in the barn one time. Her father saw her and thought they were up to no good and he beat her. Something he never had [done], and, yes, I can tell from what she remembered, that it traumatized her. It certainly gave her the better idea of why she reacted [to] some of the ways my girls acted. She must of been horrified at things that might happen, just the different view of things.

KP: She'd seen some ...

NG: Well, her home life was different, I don't know whether they were poor, or just not well-off, but, you know, my grandfather did a number of different jobs, I don't know whether he was a carpenter, or a plumber. He probably did a little bit of everything, and I don't think she was ashamed of him. I remember, she always said, "Well, my mother did this." This was about telling her the facts of life. "My mother did the best she could. My mother was still doing the best she could." You know, in a small town where nothing much goes on, especially on Sunday and you don't play games and cards on Sunday. I mean, there's still people like that in New Jersey, but not too many. ... You could see she would want to get away. In Washington, she was engaged to somebody who was Catholic and she went to see the priest. I guess she wasn't religiously acceptable, somehow that broke up. So Mother was really liberated. She might not have been liberal, but she was liberated or she thought she was. ... Certainly nothing ever restrained her.

KP: When did she retire? How long did she work in a children's library?

NG: She was in her late seventies. She was afraid to retire, because she thought she'd run out of things to do. She was at least seventy-five.

KP: What did she do after she retired? Did she run out of things?

NG: She volunteered for three things and tutoring was one. ... She volunteered for the Red Cross blood bank, and she was also re-laying the patio in the back of the house all at once ... One day, she said to me, "You know, Nancy, I don't know what I'm going to do. I lie awake nights wondering when I'm going to finish this," and I said, "You don't have to. You're retired. You're suppose to enjoy your life." But a lot of retired people, especially doers, really have trouble with that. So she ended up quite happy but busy. The only trouble was that she became involved with our children's lives, not deeply but deep enough. Mother always wanted to help somebody, especially overcome their deficiencies, and she used to, well, she would pick on them. I have two sons, and one, she used to come over [to] talk to him in the middle of the night while he was fixing his car, and he was a hapless teenager. Now, the other son, she never talked to 'cause he was sort of quiet and reserved. She had him pegged as very much like her father, because he was good at doing things with his hands and she thought he was artistic and, you know, that's up for grabs, and he ended up liking to garden. So she said, "Yes, have Chris come over and tell your father about his garden." ... I said, "Did you tell Grandpop about your garden?" He said, "Well, no."

KP: He was the one who did this voluntarily.

NG: Yes.

KP: The rest had to be encouraged to ...

NG: And for various reasons we all found it difficult, and some of it was 'cause Mother got very old looking. I mean, she not only was old, she looked old and acted old. Chris had developed a sense of just being with people.

KP: You mentioned the last five years of her life were not easy. When did your mother start to decline, 'cause you have this active woman ...

NG: About ninety-two. Well, you know, my father died, what was it, ten years ago. I don't remember these dates. ... People said, "Well, you know, your mother's not gonna last long after your father goes," and I thought, "Baloney, Mother would last through everything." ... She really handled it quite well, so she managed to keep him alive for a number of years, insisted that he stay alive. She was able to let go slowly because he lingered so long. ... Then she learned that by hiring people you could, to take care of my father, and then she just shifted it over to her. But she really needed a keeper after awhile because she had periods of being, not exactly off the wall. She'd react to medication things. You know, how old people get, yes. [laughter] ... Her sight failed and we finally got her off the road at ninety-one. [laughter] ... She said, "It's all right. I can see with my other eye. I drive this way." ...

BT: She's on the road.

NG: It took about a year and she got off the road. ...

KP: But until her nineties, her early nineties, she was going.

NG: Oh, she was very active. Yes.

KP: Yes.

NG: After she was retired, she had a riding lawn mower and she would come out in her purple suit and go out to mow. I think it was sort of show-offy, but she would do things like [that]. She'd go to the doctors and show them she could still do the split. ... I always said, "It was a good thing I wasn't competitive," but who knows. She was, you know, very active, spirited, had a lot of interests and was never bored. ... Her attitude was, "If you don't talk about getting old, you won't."

KP: It sounds like she kept her upbeat attitude as she aged.

NG: Yes, and she could always rise to the occasion, but if she didn't want to. I think she just didn't want to talk and she sure didn't want to listen toward the end. ... I guess everybody becomes self-centered as they get older, and, see, there were some of my attitudes and interests that weren't hers.

KP: What would you and your mother clash about?

NG: She just wasn't interested in ... We joined a church and became active and I think she thought we were all spending too much time there. ... I just stopped telling her about things I was doing and that my church type activities tended to be with civil rights things. I was on the Synod Committee on Church and Race, and the way we were raised we never talked about things like that. ... My husband and I became almost instant converts to social action, and we still are but we're not crazy ...

KP: But in your mother's eyes you were ...

NG: Yes, well, listen, I was sitting next to somebody in our church and we know Jack's conservative, so we joke about it. ... We were interviewing ministers and we had them do a Bible study, so I had my ACLU membership card there. ... He started joking at that, and I said, "That's right, Jack. When I get the new one, I'll give you my old one." ... So we had this badger about conservatives and liberals, and I realized that conservatives are really afraid and tense about things. But I still have to live with it. ... I think Mother's conservatism was about, "don't make waves."

BT: Keep everything inside.

NG: You got so used to the pretense of everything's fine that pretty soon you thought everything was fine. ... But, you know, she was a remarkable person. Everybody thought so and nobody would think there were any dark secrets. It's just that Mother had her notion of what children should do and projected her needs onto us.

BT: Do you think the fact that you lived next door ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

BT: What I was going to say is, I think, she could be describing my mother here.

NG: I noticed.

BT: In many ways.

NG: There's one in every family.

BT: A lot of differences, but the fact that I didn't live next door to my mother, you know, is the one thing that kept me from really almost having her totally control me. I mean, she would never had been able to completely control me, I hope, but I think when you live either in the same town or same ...

NG: Well, you make peace with things and you're not ...

BT: Yes, you have this kind of pretense that goes on.

NG: ... Also, I had that in church, you know, "don't rock the boat."

KP: What about your father? It sounds like you had a different relationship with your father. Is that true?

NG: Yes, well, that's true, it wasn't that I didn't love my father, I loved him in a different way, and I felt close to him, but I wasn't as close. I can't describe this.

KP: It sounds like he was less dominating than your mother. Is that accurate?

NG: Absolutely.

KP: That you could just really hang out with him.

NG: I think he grew up in a matriarchal household. His mother was that way and his father died when he was young, so I think it was his nature to be more passive and he was just really a nice person. ... He would, you'd have to really get him upset to get him going. I only saw him like that way twice. ... He liked to garden and our whole life was centered on "Your father needs a garden." I shouldn't laugh about it, but when Daddy was in bed, after he was 101, Mother would go out and plant tomatoes for him that he couldn't even see. So it was always sort of like carrying on this other life. But he's just a very nice person, and he had what you might call family values. I can't remember [if] we ever talked about those things, but you grow up with certain ideas. I don't know whether it's right and wrong, but I didn't have too much chance to do anything wrong. You see, I was living out there in the country. It was country then.

KP: Yes, Clark.

NG: Commuting to high school in New York and doing my radio work, so it was like living two lives and it was sort of good.

KP: How did your parents end up in Clark? Because they had been in the Camden-Philadelphia area and also California.

NG: Then they went to Baltimore. Then we went to Watchung, South Stirling. We lived in a house there. It's in Warren County, isn't it? The house is still there. ... We moved there and they rented the house, so Daddy could have a garden, and I went to a one-room schoolhouse up the road. ... Then they were trying to buy a house and they looked at some abominable places, so ... we went to this place which had lots of ground with lots of trees and a barn, you know, a barn, and a shed, two wells, and it was, you know, really heaven. My mother proceeded to make a two-acre lawn out of it. Every year she'd chisel a little more out. ... It was really bucolic, you know, next to heaven.

KP: How old were you when you moved to Clark?

NG: I think, I figured, we've been talking about this, how old we each were. I think I was ten. My sister looks three or younger in the pictures. She was around three and she's seven years younger.

KP: Before that, do you remember living in Baltimore and California?

NG: Yes. I don't remember too much about California, whether I was three or four. ... Then we came back to Haddon Heights and Daddy worked for somebody there. I guess that's when he worked for Victrola. ... You know, you remember odd things. When I say "odd," I don't remember an awful lot. I don't remember any good things. You know, I remember things like having my tonsils out, or somebody taking me to have a boil lanced, and then telling me about it, but I, the part I remember was they said it wouldn't hurt and it did. ... I remember almost drowning in the Pacific, at least it felt like that. I got caught in a wave, and this wonderful lady who took me to the beach with her five children wrapped me in a towel, and I always remember that feeling of being warm and comforted and protected. ... My grandmother, the matriarch, made pancakes once a week, and the last one was always the grandmother pancake. That's what I call it. She used the rest of the batter to fill the pan. ... I thought, "Wow, that's the thing, to have the biggest pancake."

KP: It sounds like you have very distinct memories of coming to New Jersey of the one-room schoolhouse in Watchung.

NG: Yes, I've gone to visit it. ... I could tell where it was.

KP: Oh, it's no longer there then.

NG: No, the building's there. Somebody turned it into a house.

KP: Oh, really.

NG: Yes, and you can tell which one it was. See, I'd go down that road sometimes and I can't remember the name of it. It goes all the way through from, I don't know whether it's Sterling Road over to the one that there's a school on, and King George's Road. Anyway, there were two or three dairy farms on it and the school. ... One of my friends, their father had a dairy and they didn't like milk, and the other friend lived up the street and her father was a baker. ... You could have anything you liked if you went there after school. It was, that was heaven. But the thing I remember were the outhouses in winter. They had four holes, two big ones and two little ones, and it was warm, well, at first you had body heat and then you had a lot of other unnatural heat and it was sort of, you know, cozy-clubby. ... I think they had a coal stove in the school, and there were four grades, I think, four or five.

KP: So you had an outhouse for the school.

NG: School, yes.

KP: What about your house?

NG: Oh, no, we had plumbing.

KP: What about your friends? Did they have outhouses?

NG: No, just the school.

KP: Just the school.

NG: You know, the woman who was a teacher there, at least a couple years ago, is still alive.

BT: It's a house now. I think I know where it is.

NG: ... You can tell, 'cause it has long windows and it's set back. I stopped and I was looking around and the man came out. I said, "You know," I said, "the girls' outhouse used to be out there." He said, "Yes, we found the foundations of it." ... I think it's important to have some kind of memories of your childhood that are not historical, I mean, nothing historical ever happened.

KP: How did your parents find Clark?

NG: That's where they could find a house they could afford.

KP: So they were looking around.

NG: Yes.

KP: And your father ...

NG: In that area.

KP: Where was your father working at the time, or was he? How were they able to buy this land and house?

NG: By the grace of God and the good will of the man who sold it. The man who sold it to them lived across the street and he owned a lot of the property around there. ... I think the down payment was something like a hundred dollars, and I think the total, which they paid, as they were able over years, he simply enabled them to have a home there. I don't remember what the total was, but it was very little. ... The house is quite a, the house supposedly is over two hundred years old, and that's the question of what to do with the property, which we've decided does not include keeping the house, 'cause fixing it up is, you know, not something that anybody wants to put the money into. So I told the historical society. They came and took pictures of the inside, and, supposedly, it was built by a sea captain who ran slaves, 'cause they found slave rings in the cellar. Later, Mother said, "No," she heard that wasn't true. So the historical society is really interested in this, because they said, "Well, you know, So-and-So's house up the street used to be part of the Underground Railroad," and so it was never clear. We can't find any written documents. ... You know, the house is brick-lined and its upstairs has hand-hewn beams. But it's really ready to fall apart. My sister's having a harder time parting with it.

KP: Physically, it sounds like it would need an enormous amount of money.

NG: Well, in the first place the septic system is almost defunct, and you'd have to really put a lot into that. It would need new siding. It would need shoring up. A carpenter once looked at it and said that you could never bring it up to code the way it is now. I'm not attached to old things too much ...

KP: Except, it sounds like, documents, you like documents.

NG: I like anything I'm interested in. I just [like] too many subjects ...

BT: I'm really curious of how you ended up going to school in New York, rather than in Clark. Is that because your mother's connection with radio?

NG: Well, I was doing radio and it was hard to get out of school. I went to a school where you could get excused for professional work and, you know, legally.

BT: 'Cause that's a little unusual, I think ...

NG: You what?

BT: I think that's unusual. I don't know anybody that ...

NG: That does that? Well, now, the school's still in existence. It's called the Professional Children's School, and, now, they have students who come here to study ballet, dance and music and stuff, from all over the world.

BT: So you went there when?

NG: In '36 to '40.

BT: So you were high school age?

NG: Yes.

BT: You didn't go to ...

KP: So you went to Clark schools. Well, you went to the one-room schoolhouse, and you went to the elementary, junior high in Clark.

NG: No, it was just an elementary school, you know. I didn't know whether it was kindergarten, but like K through eight.

KP: Yes, so you went to eighth grade in Clark.

NG: Yes, and I graduated from the eighth grade there.

KP: You'd mentioned earlier that Clark, before we'd started taping, it was mainly a farm community.

NG: Well, it seems that way. There were a lot of farms and there are still, there's still one working farm. There was a dairy farm and two or three big vegetable farms and one right next to us had a big spread, and they worked seven days a week, well, no, maybe they took Sunday off. They had six hired men and they just worked the field from dawn till dusk. ... Their son became a, what kind of an architect does restorations? That's what he does.

KP: Yes.

NG: Yes, and I think he works out of Princeton now. He's written books on old houses and how you paint them and artifacts and stuff. Where were we at, historical Clark?

KP: Yes. Yes, I ...

NG: Clark was a funny, the things I read about [how] it was started, who was it named after, Abraham Clark, one of the signers of the Declaration. I think it just sort of grew up hodgepodge.

KP: 'Cause you mentioned there were, besides the farm, there were a number of Central Europeans.

NG: Yes, yes.

KP: In fact you mentioned ...

NG: Russian, Ukrainian and Czech. We had Czechoslovakia then. What else did we have? Poles.

KP: You mentioned the fact that you were in the Girl Scouts ...

NG: Yes.

KP: And you mentioned there was a woman, one of your ...

NG: Friend's mothers who ...

KP: ... couldn't speak English.

NG: Well, you know, I've forgotten this girl's name. But anyway, her mother was reluctant to come. There was a parents' thing, and it was the only time I ever knew a parent who had a language problem, except for one. It was a family that came to our church from Holland a number of years ago. They were both highly educated and he eventually became the vice-president, president, CEO, of a large company. ... They always said their children were too embarrassed to have them come to school, because they had accents. ... But other than that, it was, you know, I guess a lot of people had accents. I just don't remember. I never had any trouble with that, and, you

know, I remember hearing names like "Pollack," but there wasn't real friction in school that I can remember.

KP: It sounds like your mother encouraged you to go into radio work.

NG: Yes.

KP: Even maybe pushed a little.

NG: Well, that was the speech I told you about that she gave at some woman's club that said, "Nancy was innately shy." I know what innate means. Sounds sort of like a venereal disease. ... "So I thought doing radio would bring her out," but I remember times in my life when I had difficulty being "brought out." I just was not that kind of a person. Now my sister, I think, was more outgoing or something. But I always said to people, who implied I didn't have a normal childhood, "Well, it was very interesting." Well, it was, but, see, I can't remember certain things about that time. I had a friend who died ten years ago, and I finally thought of why I grieved so long over her, because she was the only one I knew who knew how to have fun. I mean, we'd go out to play and we'd have fun, 'cause she knew how and I would go along. She was in the theatre, but she knew how to have fun. I mean, she died knowing how to have fun, and I finally thought, "Yes, that's what I lost," and so I've been trying to learn to play ever since then. But it's, you know, it's the personality thing, I think. ... My mother's message was, you know, "work hard," and it wasn't work hard so much as make the most of yourself. She wanted an imitation of herself, because she was sort of a person. But I think it's that attitude of persistence and doing something profitable. Just sitting and rocking is a great joy to me. I mean, I practice that a lot. But it was, you know, those were her needs and she certainly got all the audience she wanted. Even when we had a memorial service for Dad, Mother must have been ninety-something, and my sister and I sort of made it up as to what we thought she'd want. We'd ask her, "What do you want?" Then we came to what we thought was the end, this was in Mother's house, and she said, "Can I say something now?" Well, you know old people, they don't stop once they start, but, you know, she was on. She had been nurturing this speech in her head for six months and she had it all figured out and it all came out right and she stopped at the appropriate time. ... I thought, "Mother really needs a stage," but she would always find one, you know.

BT: She really does have ...

NG: Yes, yes. I don't think she's too frustrated, but she'd like to be involved, and so, I guess, that's a lot of what moved the family ...

KP: How old were you when you first did your first radio show? Were you a teenager, or were you still in elementary school?

NG: Well, it was before I got out of the eighth grade, so it was ...

KP: So it was fairly early.

NG: Before twelve, ten, and I didn't do anything on a regular basis, but by the time I was twelve and I was commuting to high school in New York, I knew how to get around. Now, I'm not so sure that I'd let any kids of mine go at twelve alone, but that was then. ... I [remember], you know, I think back on how I felt, that it was really scary pretending you knew how to do something. It was like not being grown up, but you had to act a certain way. ... You know, some people may think it's good for your character, but they always say, "The heck with character, you'll figure that out sometime." But it was interesting, and I had some interesting experiences. ... I remember I always said to people, "I'm only doing this to make money to get through college," so I never aimed to do any ...

KP: You just wanted to do this for college money then?

NG: Yes.

BT: Not going to be a career. You had no pretensions to a career in radio.

NG: ... When I got out of the service, I went back, 'cause it was the only thing I knew how to do. ... There wasn't any work, and everybody was out of the service looking for work.

KP: What type of shows did you do? How would the work vary?

NG: Well, a lot of it came through, apparently there was some kind of ABC or NBC heading, what do they call it, an artist registry. Oh, it was like having a, not a manager and an agent, but the calls were channeled through there for particular kinds of people and you'd get recommended and you pay them ten percent. I found my mother's accounting of my great income ...

KP: How much, yes, how much did you make?

NG: Well, I remember there ... were several that was thirty dollars and they were usually soap operas or a type and you'd get more. By the time the union came in, you got paid decently, and, you know, I didn't believe in unions. I remember when they were trying to organize, it was American Federation of Radio Artists, I guess I thought he was some kind of communist or something. I mean, I had no idea what union organizing was.

KP: So this was just a gut reaction. It sounds like ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... in the end you were glad the union came in.

NG: Well, you know, we never studied unions, and, maybe in high school we did, but by that time ... it came down to everybody was doing it and it was going to be for the benefit of the workers and so that was sort of interesting. ... I did a couple of things, like the show called the *March of Time*.

KP: Oh, yes.

NG: ... There was something else I remember. ... A lot of these evening things were like variety shows and they would have little skits in the middle of them ... I was often a dying child, it seems to me, in one of them. But the one I really remember the best was *Peter Pan*, and they had Eva Le Gallienne doing it. I saw Eva Le Gallienne do *Peter Pan* when I was four and I grew up on *Peter Pan*. Somebody said, "As long as you don't become that in your old age," but I was one of the twins, you know, it was the lost boys, and I just thought this was the biggest experience of my life. ... Eva Le Gallienne was really a nice person, and she was nice to kids and, you know, not high falutin or anything. ... I was on something, I guess it was this *Philip Morris Show*, something before Orson Welles became the "boy wonder." He was doing radio then and he was on one of those shows. What I remember about, you know, there was this group of actors who seemed to work together. It was him, and Everett Sloane and Martin Gable, who all became, in the movies or something, but they were good actors and what I remember about them is they took their work seriously and worked hard at it. They were not big shots. It's like anywhere you have stuffy people and ...

KP: So you did encounter your share of stuffy people in the radio business?

NG: You have to have an ego. But it was, you know, I found a surprising amount of people were really nice people. I don't remember anyone being mean to little kids and I really had a hard time with adults. I always felt like a child and didn't know how to speak to adults.

KP: I'm just thinking of some recent movies, but I know for the average American, I mean, being in radio had a sort of glamour about it, an excitement.

NG: It depended on where you were. When I was going to school in Clark, I wanted to go to another school. I remember being in the girl's room once and hearing these two girls talking about me, and one said, "Oh, she thinks she's so good because she does radio." I thought I'd die, you know, absolutely die. ... You know, kids don't want to be different, and the school I went to, I only ran into one or two kids who ever talked about their professional work. ... Well, there was a girl who was a pianist, a concert pianist, and she would talk about things she was on. ... What other kids did was just ignore her. Nobody talked about the shows they were in or their dates. They just didn't talk about it. They were in school.

KP: Really, so you would talk about what you might talk about in Clark, you know.

NG: Yes. When I was teaching in school at the Professional Children's School, that was interesting. There were a couple of kids who were in shows, I guess, and I only knew it because I happened to know it. But the boys would talk about baseball and the baseball things and talk about what kids talk about. ... I would guess a number of them were pushed into it by parents. ... Some of them had real talent that you only develop early on. ... I don't know whether my sister was in this class, but one year, I think, it was when I was teaching there, there were two kids in the eighth grade who had detention. In that school, since you worked in the afternoon, you had to come an hour early. School started at ten, so you had to come at nine. ... Dicky Van Patton, Dick Van

Patton always had detention, and I have a picture of him with his, you know, his little sailor collar. ... The other was Eugene Istomin, who became a pianist. ...

KP: Oh, yes, yes.

NG: ... and Eugene had detention. I think it was largely 'cause he may not have done his homework. I mean, you really had to do your homework and turn it in. ... If you weren't there, you had to turn in your correspondence work. I mean, it was ...

BT: That would have been a very hard life ...

NG: It seems ...

BT: ... if you're performing and you're in school it's like ...

NG: It wasn't so bad for me, 'cause I didn't do that much professional work, but ...

BT: But if you were a concert pianist, for example.

NG: Well, see, they weren't yet. They were just practicing, and they would just practice five hours a day ... and four, five or six. ... They would practice in the morning before school and they'd go home and practice some more, and they didn't think anything about it.

BT: They didn't complain ever that you can remember?

NG: I remember hearing somebody named Jimmy Lydon on the radio program a number of years ago. He was Henry Aldridge for awhile, and he's about my age. ... I remember him saying that when he was growing up, his brothers and sisters went out to play and he had to work, and I think it was like that for a lot of people. ... You know, your parents may tell you you're wonderful and you like this and this is your future, but I don't think children can really choose. ... I think something like musical talent is different, 'cause you really have to work on it early, but then not everybody was Mozart. ... There were really a lot of really excellent pianists at school. Eugene was the only one I've ever heard of since then.

KP: Does your school ever have reunions? Have you ever had a reunion?

NG: They started putting out a sort of newsletter and trying to attract alumni, 'cause they have a lot of really good alumni, but it was very [hard], 'cause some people wouldn't finish school. They'd go on and finish someplace else. But the interesting thing about it was, when people writing in it would talk about how grateful they were that they had a good education and they were prepared to do other things, but at the time they could fulfill their professional ambitions.

KP: So it sounds like you were ever pleased with the education you were getting at the high school.

NG: Oh, yes. It wasn't just the education. By the time I got to college, I was used to doing homework, and there was the discipline, 'cause if you didn't turn it in, you got the axe or something. ... New York State had this child, anti-child abuse group in New York City. It was always a joke, you know, the Gary Society will get you. ... It was to protect performing children from being exploited. ... The school was licensed by the Board of Regents of New York and you had to qualify to take regents exams. ... By the time you finished, you didn't have any choices of courses, but you had preparation. ... I had teachers that were so committed that if you didn't work hard enough, they thought, "What's the matter? You haven't done your French?" You know, this was the most important thing in the world. If you have a teacher like that, you really work.

KP: What tuition was charged for this school?

NG: Eleven dollars a month.

BT: I was wondering. Your sister went, too.

KP: So you were apparently making enough to pay tuition and still have money left over.

NG: Yes, I paid my commutation ticket and the subway and tuition, and the orthodontist was about the same price a month.

KP: Oh, God.

NG: I worked my way through braces and ...

BT: That's interesting.

NG: ... and by the time I got to college, I had some money in the bank, not a lot. ... I remember, one year I got a four in, what do they call it, health, it wasn't mental health. It was one semester or something, but I got a four in eight weeks and my mother thought I would lose my scholarship ... She didn't know where we would get the money. She really got upset. I didn't think it was that important. It was really a dumb course, but, you know, I felt the pressure to make good, even though I had felt I had paid my dues all along. ... Still, I didn't have money to spend. I didn't know whether my parents sent me an allowance ... but I remember feeling really tight. ... I've just started to learn to spend money, and I don't mean riotously, but I can go in a store and say, "Oh, I'd like that," and buy it, and so before I die, I'll have a lot of toys.

BT: Good, good for you. Do you think any of that's from the Depression era?

NG: Oh, yes.

BT: I mean, for just everybody in general.

NG: Yes. ... I think women tend to be that way, because you have to manage the family things. I could go out and buy things for my kids but not for myself.

BT: How did you end up at NJC, since you went into New York for school? Did you ever consider a New York school?

NG: No, I sure didn't want to commute.

BT: Hofstra's there, I know.

NG: To be perfectly frank I think, when I say "I think," my mother thought of it, I was not what you call a pushy student. ... When I applied for college, it was April of my senior year in high school. ... Mother would get the forms and say, "Well, I think you better fill it out. Have you filled this out yet?" I said, "Oh, yes, I'll get to it." ... Of course, things were a lot different then and I did get a scholarship, a partial scholarship. ... I think it's the only school I applied to, and I, you know, it seemed good. I think I had a friend who was going to go there. I just went and I had a good time. I felt it was a worthwhile experience, and the funny thing is, I thought I was so mature when I got out. I thought I was mature when I was in college.

KP: But in some ways, you had done, I mean, you had ...

NG: Well, that's why I thought I was mature.

KP: You had commuted to high school. You did radio work. I mean, you saw people. I think you mentioned you saw Orson Welles ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... when he was just staring out. I mean, so you had really ...

NG: I'd been around.

KP: Yes. I mean, most of my students haven't had that, and I haven't had that experience.

NG: ... See ... the other students would do things, like they'd be waitresses or maybe do babysitting. There wasn't too much girls could do then, so I really felt fortunate. It may not have been easy money, but it was certainly painless and you learn something along the way. ... I don't think I could've ever bothered with any of this if I hadn't gone to a therapist and found out what was missing in my life, but, you know, I think it's okay to feel and see where you are, so you don't end up totally crazy. But I think it gives you a perspective on, you know, where you came from, so you don't have to marry a man like your father, which I probably did. My mother wrote me this long letter about my husband, before he finished college. Now, it could've killed any other romance, but I really believed my mother knew best.

BT: This was before you married your husband ...

NG: Yes.

BT: ... or after you married your husband?

NG: We met in April of my senior year. I graduated in June. He finished in September, and then he went in the Navy and proposed in November on the boardwalk in Wildwood.

BT: Oh, yes, you told me that.

NG: Yes. But I found this glowing letter from my mother, and I thought, "Boy, I really, I think I got suckered into it," because Mother was really good at picking out qualities in people.

BT: You said that before.

NG: And ... and we still like each other.

BT: Well, then maybe she was right.

NG: Yes, very likeable person.

BT: So she sort of wrote you, was it a sort of cheerleading letter on his behalf? Was it positive about him.

NG: Absolutely, it was almost promotional.

BT: Interesting.

NG: Yes.

KP: You came to NJC and you majored in English. Why did you choose English as a major?

NG: Well, I was going to major in journalism. I wanted to work for the newspaper, and then I took the course in English with ...

KP: Professor Burroughs.

NG: Mr. Burroughs, who you must have heard of, the God of all English majors. I didn't even know whether he was a good teacher. You know, he was just a very admirable person, just knew a lot. You know, he could stand there and read a poem in Greek as if we were supposed to understand it and, you know, far above most of us. ... He thought that journalism would ruin my writing style, of which I didn't yet have any, so I said, "You know, I'll be an English major." ... That's not what I'd pick if I was doing it again, but I don't know what I would pick, probably journalism because I think that's a good discipline.

KP: Did you want to become a journalist initially?

NG: Yes.

KP: You had the idea.

NG: Yes, I sort of think I wanted to do that. I can tell you all the things I didn't want to become ...

KP: It sounds like you didn't want to do radio again.

NG: No, I thought of going into advertising, until at some point in my life, I decided that I was prostituting my talent writing advertising copy.

KP: You know, it sounds like that would have been your mother's possible calling, advertising, 'cause of her just upbeat personality.

NG: Well, nowadays, there are a whole lot of things that you can do, but ...

KP: Did you feel limited in occupations as a woman, at the time?

NG: You know, at that time, I don't remember that we were aware of being women, because it was a woman's college and we were pretty disconnected from Rutgers ... unless you had a boyfriend here, and I only had one at the end of my senior year.

BT: So they were down over there.

NG: Yes. ... I didn't go to football games, and I didn't take part in anything on the Rutgers campus, so it was like an isolated little, you know, comfortable place over there. ... We all thought we were intellectual hot shots, I think.

KP: Well, the campus newspaper on Douglass was much more intellectual than Rutgers' *Targum*.

NG: Yes, I imagine so.

KP: I mean, there were much more prominent, I mean, occasionally you'd see them in the *Targum*, but students have noticed that the Douglass papers had much more stories about current events or seminars or lectures or ...

NG: Well, it was pretty serious, and, you know, I worked on that a little bit. ... The reason, all the people who ran it were the quote, "liberals," and they were, you know, on the verge of, not being rebellious, but sort of outspoken about things. ... I guess I wanted, would have liked to have been that way, but I wasn't, so I thought some of it might rub off.

BT: What were they being outspoken about? This would have been 1939.

NG: '40, well, let's see, '40 to '44. I remember ...

BT: I mean, what is being liberal in 1940 mean?

NG: Well, one of the girls ended up being a union organizer. We heard that this girl, not anybody in our class, but it was sort of like, "Was she a communist?" ... In high school, our history teacher was fairly liberal, and when I say "liberal" I mean, not wildly crazy, I think she was open-minded. But the story was that two of the boys that subscribed to the *Daily Worker* and had it sent to the school. It was the kind of school you could do that with. But she was just open-minded. You know, the one thing I remember [about the] pre-war [period] was about ... What did they call that now?

KP: The common front?

NG: No, not stonewalling, isolationism. It's the first place I heard about isolationism and had any ideas that countries interacted, and we had a lot of European history, so I had, at least had clues that there was more than one country ...

BT: So the conservatives were more isolationists.

NG: Yes, I guess so, and, of course, my parents always voted for Republicans, so I ...

BT: Were they isolationists?

NG: I don't remember. I wasn't terribly interested in those things, even in college. I remember one person that first turned me on to social activism. That is, when I say "turn me on," she would organize things and they weren't outrageous. They were politically meaningful.

KP: Well, I saw in the yearbook, for example, that Eleanor Roosevelt spoke on campus.

NG: Yes.

BT: I noticed that, too. I saw her picture.

NG: ... My roommate and best friend was the, I think she was, Betty was on the head of the Government Association, and she had dinner with Eleanor Roosevelt and she said she was just a wonderful person.

BT: I think that's such a wonderful experience.

NG: Yes. But, see, there wasn't too much emphasis on women's work ... I think you took the culture sort of for granted. ... See, when I was in the service, we didn't have anything like Tailhook. Those things just did not happen. ... We went to separate boot camps, and we might work together, but I never remember anything, even from officers, but respect. ... So whatever's going on now is the culture, it's not the service. Well, [it] may be the service, but I simply don't remember being aware of women's issues.

KP: Even though you were going to a women's college.

BT: Yes, that's what I'm trying to figure out.

NG: Well, I think the college promoted that. I think you got to take it for granted that you were lucky to be in a women's college, and you felt that this was one place where you could sort of be yourself and you didn't have to compete with boys, and so I thought it was good. But ... I don't even remember the first time I felt that it was different to be a woman. ... I know the first time. I was an enlisted person, and one of the officers said, "You know, why don't you apply for a commission?" ... I said, "Okay." ... My mother said, "Well, you wouldn't want to do that, 'cause it would make Bill feel, whatever, lesser or something." See, he was enlisted, too. ...

BT: So therefore if you had become an officer, you would have got one, too.

NG: We used to have these jokes about that. They'd used to tell us in boot camp, "What do you do if your husband's an officer, kiss him first or salute? Salute." But, listen, you believe all that stuff, and, you know, it was an orderly world.

BT: Officers and enlisted men or enlisted women did not fraternize. Well, they may have. We'll get to that.

NG: Socially, yes.

BT: But in a lot of theaters in the world, you know, you were not allowed to date. You were not supposed to.

NG: Well, they did on our base, and I don't know whether it was ... I know a lot of girls who went out with pilots. I won't say a lot, but there was a ...

KP: Yes.

NG: And you got along with the officers pretty [well] on a non-fraternizing basis, I mean, just because they were nice people. ... Now, there was the only ... bad person on the base was the WAVE officer, who was in her thirties, and she used to chase young pilots, so we decided she was a little screwed up. ... You could always find her in the BOQ bar. ... She was a "manizer," or whatever the opposite was of a womanizer.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

KP: This continues an interview with Mrs. Nancy P. Godfrey on February 14, 1997 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Kurt Piehler and ...

BT: Barbara Tomblin.

KP: before we go to your war service, there are a number of questions about Douglass. One of the things we've noticed about the similarities between Rutgers and then NJC were certain things like chapel. What do you remember about chapel?

NG: It was compulsory. It was my only touch with religion. ... I was a waitress, so I got out of, we had to go twice a week and I got out of Friday, I think. ... Tuesday was the religious one. ... The thing is, in recalling what kind of spirituality I got, I wasn't brought up on anything in particular, because Mother wanted us to choose our own, and who knows how to choose? ... So a lot of it was the ritual. It was like going to church, if the ritual's good and so on, or once in a while they'd have a pretty good speaker. ... So, now, you see, it was hard to get in touch with your higher power if you thought it was all this display of various things, and I never took a religion course. But you know, you accepted it like you had to have food, so, you had to have food stamps.

KP: Well, actually Douglass we actually read, in terms of one of the editors, there was in the paper the story of how the Douglass, the NJC, women were admonished by the dean for making too much noise during chapel service, knitting and ...

NG: That could have been anything. See, I don't remember, because, you know, it was no big deal. People would complain about it, but since I only had to go once, we missed the good ones. I mean, on Fridays, they had interesting things, non-religious or non-denominational. But, you know, this thing with chapel, I had a friend who belonged to a university fellowship and she went to a conference one year. ... She was supposed to report on it at their meeting, so she invited her friends to come and support. So one of the things she mentioned was these other colleges they had mixed races, you know, people of different color. ... I got up and said, "Well, you know, I think the trouble here is that the administration does not allow black students to live on campus," which they didn't, and you could have black students in the student body but not living on campus.

BT: I was going to ask you that.

KP: You were aware of that.

NG: Everybody ...

KP: Everybody ...

NG: ... Everybody knew this. This is such a surprise to people now. But my sister was, got married her senior year and she had to live in a separate house, 'cause she was married, along with the separated black students. So they had a house on Douglass that was for separated brethren, I guess ...

KP: So she ...

NG: Your idea of what counted was slightly blurred. Anyway, I got called to the dean's office and [was] asked to, I guess, repent, or something. What did she say? Maybe she said [that] I shouldn't feel that way, I should understand that they had to sort of bow to the will of the parents. ... That

was the excuse they gave, and, well, Dean Boddie was from the South and I don't mean that didn't made any difference, but, you know.

KP: It's funny you should bring Dean Boddie up, because she, there was the counterpart at Rutgers Dean Metzger, who had ...

NG: Oh, yes. [laughter] "Whistling Willie."

KP: No, that was Demarest, "Whistling Willie."

NG: Oh, my husband tells me about those things.

KP: Yes. No, I remember, 'cause he was retired at that point, but he, apparently, used to speak at convocations and so forth and with his "Whistling Willie."

NG: Yes.

KP: But Dean Metzger was a stern Calvinist, and Dean Boddie seems to have been almost the counterpart.

NG: Well, she was probably, culturally, not keeping women in their place, but ...

KP: One previous interview said she had certain set views of the proper way to raise women.

NG: Yes.

KP: It might ...

NG: She probably did. ... They should've got somebody you got along with. You didn't, see, I never reacted to people in those days. You know, I just let them say what they were going to.

KP: Well, I had, the one story, several stories I was told about Dean Boddie, was one, this person even then, found it amusing that women students who would get married while still in school, Dean Boddie had sort of instructed them not to talk to the unmarried students about what happened when they got married ...

NG: Yes, you had to get married quietly, too. There was somebody in our class who had to get secretly married, because you weren't allowed to get married while you were a student at that time, I think ... or you had to live off campus. ... It became awkward if your spouse was in the service and off someplace else. But you know, I think we felt they were, things were not right, but we didn't have a clue about how to go about changing it, except make pompous statements in public meetings.

KP: I mean, another story that was told about Dean Boddie was, apparently, when Camp Kilmer was set up, that was a, basically, first aid venereal disease station. Dean Boddie had not known

fully what this station was and she volunteered NJC women to help assist it, and, apparently, the Army said, "That's okay. We appreciate your cooperation ..."

NG: I didn't even know.

KP: Apparently, some of the women, this student, at the time, knew what the station was and just laughed, because if Dean Boddie had only known what she was volunteering women ...

BT: She would never have volunteered.

NG: Well, I know we had to go downtown in fours, groups of four at night.

KP: Because of Camp Kilmer.

NG: "Watch those soldiers."

KP: So Camp Kilmer really did have an impact on the ...

NG: Oh, yes, changed the social climate, I guess, and I don't remember anybody going with, going out with soldiers.

BT: Did they go to any USO dances? Well, obviously, if they weren't ...

NG: I didn't. They may have ...

BT: Yes. I've always wondered if there was a social distinction between, you know, a class thing between people who went to USO dances or canteens, those girls, and then college girls, or upper-middle class girls ...

NG: I don't remember hearing that. See, in the entertainment field, a lot of people did USO work. I mean, people and things from my high school newsletter, "So-and-So worked in the USO," and so on and so on, and, you know, it was the thing to do, I think. I don't think I went.

BT: So as a Douglass, or, you know, an NJC girl you ...

NG: Yes.

BT: ... might have just gone into town to a USO dance, and no one would have thought ...

NG: Yes, I didn't have a problem with soldiers. ... When I was in the Navy, I went to service school in Atlanta, Fort Benning was near there and some other place ... it was an orthopedic hospital, and we either picked up or got picked up by two guys we went out with. ... It was, you know, what are you going to do in the town? ... One of them, they were both from this orthopedic hospital and they had been injured in training and not healed, so they were gimping around, and it was just, you know, people.

BT: People.

NG: ... There wasn't so much class, I don't think, quite as much. There was somebody in my class, who was from what we call "beautiful, colonial Westfield," which is next door to me, and she said her father was a shoemaker. ... She said, "We lived on the wrong side of town and I always felt that in high school," and that was the first time I ever had a clue that people, you know, that that was done. Now, in my school, we didn't have black students, but I never knew it until later. Someone said the president of the school, Mrs. Robinson, had felt that they probably wouldn't mix. Now, I always thought Mrs. Robinson was a good Christian woman because somebody said that she was the daughter of a bishop, and I thought if you're a bishop that means you're a good person. ... So when she died, then they could have black students and I just always thought that was sort of strange.

KP: I'm curious about Camp Kilmer, because what was striking is when I've asked the men, who went to Rutgers at the time, about Camp Kilmer, and they said, "Oh, no problem. No difference." But apparently some have sort of, particularly, had more involvement with New Brunswick. I mean, you had this huge camp with a bunch of men. It's not so much that they were men but these were guys ready to go overseas, so they have no tie to this area. I mean, this is it. This is their last fling before going overseas, so I have this image really of a lot of wild guys who were trying to get drunk, who were carousing the town.

NG: Well, see, I didn't go into town. I never heard about the carousing, and, you know, things were under control, or we were oblivious.

KP: Yes.

NG: ... See ... things were different then. You know, the first time I ever saw somebody come in from liberty drunk was a woman in our barracks, who apparently regularly got drunk. She would go in and she was the daughter of a physician and from a good family, and she was probably an alcoholic and she would get politely drunk. I'd see her sitting alone at the bar, so she was not a social drinker, and it was, you know, very sad. It was the first time I ever came across that. ... It didn't seem to be a problem. Although, when my husband came to Wildwood, so we could get engaged and he stayed at a rooming house. You had a feeling that, you know, sailors were, would come to no good, and we would sit on opposite ends of this couch, where he was staying overnight, and this woman would look at us. ... It was like being chaperoned and things were different then. When I say "they were different," I felt more the officer-enlisted difference than I did a class difference, you know, I don't know why. Maybe it's just inculcated in you. Maybe you think it should be a class. You know, some officers were really pompous. ... You'd hear about ... regular Navy from Annapolis and how they would turn their back on the Reserve people. Outside of [that], generally, you know, we didn't have a problem. ... You didn't have a problem with the pilots.

KP: You did mention you did travel with groups of four once Camp Kilmer came in.

NG: Yes.

KP: That was ...

NG: That was required.

KP: That had happened before.

NG: It was fun when the war started and Camp Kilmer came.

KP: And you lived on campus.

NG: Yes.

KP: So you had the curfews and the ...

NG: Well, we always had those.

KP: Yes.

NG: We were born with ...

BT: Born with curfews.

KP: You also had, when the war came, apparently, you had, initially, the air raid drills and blackouts. Do you remember any of those?

NG: I don't remember. We probably did have them, but I don't remember them.

KP: They don't stick out.

NG: No. There was hardly any awareness of a real war, but you probably picked up the story of the German professor who went off on a lifeboat.

KP: Yes, we were going to ask ...

NG: ... The Class of '41 or '42. I knew somebody from, a girl in, a woman in '40 or '41, and he was the German professor, I think, at Douglass.

KP: Hauptmann, Professor Hauptmann.

NG: Yes. ... It's one of these stories that comes up every once in awhile.

KP: You never had him as a professor, Hauptmann?

NG: No. I think I sort of heard the story, but it was like everything is a myth out there. See, there was no television and the radio was very limited.

KP: What about the newspapers? Did people read the newspapers regularly at all?

NG: Yes, I don't remember reading a lot of newspapers. I don't remember being too connected with the outside world. It was mostly what my parents would talk about, or I'd hear other people say, "The news is always bad." ... When I got to boot camp, I remember the company commander, whose fiancé was in Italy, I think. She hadn't heard from him for, you know, a number of months, and it gave you some awareness that there were, you know, people getting killed. See, the only person I'd ever heard of who was killed was somebody in my high school who joined the Canadian army underage, while we were in high school, and he got, he was at Dunkirk. Then he was in one of those air drops into Denmark and had some head injury and died eventually ...

KP: Was he Canadian?

NG: I think he had been, his family was either English, or something like that. He was somebody in high school, and he went and joined up.

KP: Sounds like he, I mean, he volunteered out of patriotism.

NG: Yes, yes. ... People did that then. You know, people I knew, the boys were doing it partly because it was inevitable. When I say "were idealistic," I never knew a conscientious objector until I met one on a voter registration drive. He said it was really bad being one, and, you know, he was a Quaker. Yes, this was after the war ...

BT: There weren't too many.

KP: How many years after you met him did you ...

NG: Oh, this was an incidental. I got roped into going into a voter registration drive in Atlantic City, and he was in our group and he said he had been a CO.

KP: What year was this, in the '60s or before?

NG: Yes, probably, probably.

KP: Yes.

NG: ... But it was interesting, because it was not exactly, it was sort of frowned on. But when I heard during the Vietnam War, there seemed to be all sorts of ways of trying to avoid, and some of them, you didn't want to know how your kids didn't pass theirs. One of mine went on a diet and lost ten pounds ...

KP: Was he under weight?

NG: He looks scrawny anyway, but ...

KP: You also played field hockey when you were ...

NG: See, I'd never played sports. We didn't have sports in high school.

KP: 'Cause you, your high school wasn't that big in size. How many students were there in your high school?

NG: Well, there were eight in senior high school. Probably, at that time, there were, counting the grammar school, there were, oh, I don't know, it took up two floors of an office building.

KP: So that's not very big.

NG: That was on 59th Street. No, it wasn't very big.

KP: So in some ways, Douglass was a big school. I mean, you were ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... compared to your high school.

NG: But I felt I'd been around, outside of not playing field hockey.

KP: Yes.

NG: ... I liked to play games, and I never got a chance to, so I thought that was good.

KP: You mentioned before the tape was on that the war, you had physical education, you had gym classes that were now required and you also had, apparently, a class in auto repair, in automobile ...

NG: That was the Red Cross. Gym wasn't required. The electives were, if you wanted to prepare yourself for the battle to come or something, it was preparedness, and you, it was like physical fitness. That was what it was called. ... You went over these hurdles, if you look in the yearbook there's somebody climbing one of these, nobody really knew how to get fit and anyway it was too late. But it was, you know, the best people could do with that. But I've forgotten the question now. Are you back at field hockey?

KP: You mentioned also automobile ...

NG: Oh, yes. You could sign up for first aid. You could take first aid, and that was good. ... You could take, what did they call it, automobile mechanics, or something. It was like first aid for cars, and it was instructive and it was partially hands-on but not too much.

KP: It was mainly, I think you mentioned most of it was book ...

NG: Yes, not as book as another one I took as a civilian. Somebody read out of the catalog. But you know ... you knew where the parts of the car were. ... See, I didn't know how to drive. I didn't get a license until we had our first child, and that's not how I got pregnant [laughter] but ... my husband was ready to die as he was taking me out, but ... you know, you just did those things.

BT: You didn't need a car ...

NG: Nobody had cars.

BT: Nobody had them, yes. It's amazing to people that there was a time when ...

KP: Yes, I tried to

BT: ... you didn't get one.

KP: I'm trying to convince my students of that, which they find it hard to believe, that you could go without a car. I think you mentioned it before, but how did you meet your husband? Yours is not the first Douglass-Rutgers, NJC-Rutgers romance.

NG: I was not out looking.

KP: Yes, someone was, though, it sounds like.

NG: He had had a date. Some girl asked him to find a date, or he asked somebody to find a date for this friend of his who was blind, and Howard was, well, several years older than we were. ... Bill used to read to him and I don't know whether he was a Chi Psi or not, but anyway. Remember, they lived in the fraternity, and somehow it ended up that, that Betty and Howard got together. ... Then they decided that Bill and I should get together, and so we arranged this, literally, blind date. We went for pizza, which was then called "tomato pie," and I can point to where it used to be, where the pizza parlor used to be.

KP: Where was it?

NG: It was on, not Albany Street, but one of those streets off of George Street, and it's not there anymore. ... I thought, "If Howard can eat pizza, I'll watch him and then I'll figure out how," and he just handled it very neatly. ... So then we walked back to the fraternity house, and on the way my husband talked about his jazz records. ... Let me tell you, I played the violin and I never listened to jazz and it was boring. I didn't tell him that. Then I had to pretend I knew what he was talking about, you know, act interested, so I'd said, "Oh, yes. I've heard that." So that's our point of difference. That's what he knew how to talk about and I didn't ... but he was very, you know, personable person, and he wanted to meet again. ... Then my mother, of course, encouraged it. She invited us all back after ... some senior dance. ... The joke was that he, when I went into the

service, he had a service star in his window and baked brownies and sent them, which he actually did. [laughter]

BT: That's a reversal.

NG: ... We hit it off.

KP: Yes, you're still married, and you still even ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... like each other.

NG: He was a very likeable person, still is.

KP: Yes.

NG: ... See, my father had been, well, my father was an electrical engineer. Bill was a mechanical engineer, so they used engineers as being employable, I think ...

KP: You graduated normal in 1944. When did you decide you were going to enlist in the Navy? When did you think that the war ...

NG: I think in the spring of that year.

KP: Had you thought of other options?

NG: Partly because I found something, I have a book on the WAVES signed in April of, you know, that my mother gave me. Of course, it's her writing.

BT: So your mother knew you were interested in the Navy.

NG: Oh, this was after I decided.

BT: After you decided. Oh, okay.

NG: ... I think I had my letters of recommendation.

KP: Before we started taping, you mentioned that for some reason you were absolutely fascinated by the Navy and by the sea, that that had been a ...

NG: Always had been, and I don't know why. I just ...

KP: You said you would hang pictures of ships ...

NG: Yes, I had pictures of ships, and ... my room had ship wallpaper and the bed spread was ships. ... My sister and I shared a room with a double-decker bed, of course, and I got to sleep on the top, 'cause I was the older one. ... She said Mother put something with stars on the bottom of the bunk. But I don't, I never carried it too far, 'cause I didn't have money to go into buying a boat. I thought about it. ... One of the things I did in high school, was a friend of mine and I cut class to go visit ... these brothers, called the Fahnstock brothers, who were going to sail around the world on a small boat in the East River, and my friend's mother knew their mother, so we got this letter and we managed to get out of school. It was the day we were going to see the Picasso exhibit, you know the *Guernica* thing, and we said, "Well, we can do that another time." ... They showed us around the boat, and or the ship, or whatever, and we just thought this was wonderful. They eventually floundered and the ship washed ashore. ... See, I had all these books about people who sail around the world. I'm still cutting out these picture stories about old men who've sailed around. See, I wouldn't, I've only been on a sailboat a of couple times. I think it's mostly an illusion of some kind, not an illusion, but a fantasy or a romantic thing.

KP: You were also intrigued by Annapolis, you mentioned.

NG: But, no, I wouldn't have gotten [in]. No, I got somebody to get me an Annapolis pen. See, anything naval. When the Japanese midshipmen were in New York on their cruise, I went out of Walgreen's Drugstore and asked one for his autograph. I mean, well, they weren't bad then, the Japanese were okay. I would go up to anybody in a uniform, well, but not American, you know, it was just very romantic. ... I don't know what his name was. I had a button off somebody's peacoat that I wore on a string around my neck. ... I don't even remember when it started.

KP: But it sounds like it was pretty early ...

NG: Yes. ... I was in the Sea Scouts, but we never went to sea, briefly.

BT: I noticed in the yearbook, you know, the wartime section, the 1944 one, that there's a big WAVES recruiting poster on the back of some girl's door.

NG: Yes.

BT: One of my enduring questions is, why were there so many more WAVES from NJC than there were from any other schools?

NG: They might have made a recruiting push.

BT: I wondered if you could remember ...

NG: Well, something ...

BT: ... if they recruited.

NG: ... probably got me turned on. ... I knew a man who wrote radio scripts and they were recruiting ones. But he interviewed me and wrote one and then I was in it when I was in boot camp. ... It was interesting because I got off whatever we were doing ...

KP: This was like old, you'd done this before countless times.

NG: Yes, but not in a setting where everybody else is sort of imprisoned in their room or doing something and to get off ... The man who was running this program was a, I think he was an actors' agent, and he was, you know, if there's anything typical ... he was a full lieutenant, and he was sort of a, you know, broad, white, dandy fellow. He wasn't quite that wide. ... You know, he would tell me things like, "Don't, you know, never volunteer." ... I was always very much of a conformist and did the right things and followed the rules, always, and it gets to be a bore after a while. But it's hard to know when to just, you know, overlook things, so that was sort of an interesting interlude. ... That was the most recruiting I ever did, and the script was a dismal. It was so embarrassing, I don't even have a copy of it. I wonder where it was. ... It was, you know, well, things were pretty corny back then. If you ...

BT: Yes.

NG: ... remember, just very corny and ...

KP: And people didn't even realize they were corny. So you in a sense, the Navy was looking for people at NJC.

NG: I guess so.

KP: And you were ...

NG: But I was ripe.

KP: And you were looking to join the Navy.

NG: Yes, yes.

KP: So after ...

BT: How did you go about that?

KP: Yes. Where did you enlist?

BT: Did you walk into a recruiting office?

KP: Yes. Where did you enlist and ...

NG: I only remember going downtown. I had to fill out some forms, and I had to go to downtown New York for the ...

KP: So you had to go to the naval recruiting station in New York.

BT: Yes, there was a big one.

NG: Ninety Pine Street, or something Pine Street.

BT: Yes, something like that.

NG: ... It's was way downtown. ... I've forgotten that at one point I was told that I couldn't get a commission, "Would I like to be enlisted?" That's where I had to work that one over, and, you know, there's a certain, I don't know what it is, I think it's more with parents, but about ...

KP: Your mother would have probably ...

NG: "You're not gonna be an officer. You're a college graduate, and you're not gonna be an officer." ...

BT: Yes, that's true.

NG: But, you know, it's like that with the guys. I mean, my husband had a degree in mechanical engineering. He finished school. He got out to Hawaii. He went to service schools for a year. He got to Hawaii, and they said, "Oh, we see you're a mechanical engineer, can you fix trucks?" ... He had to explain to them there was no relationship between fixing trucks and being an engineer, but, so they just, you know, sorted people out. There were a lot of people who were ...

BT: Particularly in 1944.

NG: Yes. You know, this isn't connected with Rutgers, but I ran across a story in one of our, we had this literary magazine called *Hornbook*, written by Dr. Sydney Cook, and he had tried to enlist. He had been, I think, in World War I in the ambulance corps, I think, and it's a story he wrote that his wife let him publish and it was called "Soldier Sunday," or something like that. It reminded me of parts of a movie where the guy's in church, and, part of it, he's in the Army. Anyway, it was a lot of that, and a lot of, you know, what it was like to be, and, apparently, he wanted to stay. He wanted to get into combat and he was too old, or something, so, I guess, [he] hung combat up. But the interesting thing was in the preface, they wrote, "We had said last year," now this was 1944, "We said last year we were not going to print any war stories," because I've forgotten the reason, but they were making some exceptions. I thought it was like they weren't going to be realistic, or they were gonna' be over-romanticized. I just thought that was an interesting thing to come across.

BT: They're not going to have war stories.

NG: ... I think it was because they would not be true to ...

KP: To what was really happening.

NG: Yes. Well, I remember really, even though my father would tell me how, and you'd see clips of World War I. Yes, I didn't realize until recently, until they had a lot more on something, how really devastating it was, and, in fact, I didn't realize how World War II, how many personnel were lost in the Pacific in World War II. I had no idea that there were that many ... because in our world nobody ever dies, and, see, Wildwood was sort of a, not a staging area, but they had squadrons that would come in and regroup and train people. Then they'd go out to a carrier. Then they'd come in and they'd ... Then when I used to watch these carrier movies, I thought, "I wonder how many of them died?" It's a wonder any of them ever made a landing. But people didn't, you know, didn't talk about those things.

BT: You didn't get training accidents? There must have been.

NG: Yes.

BT: What always amazes me about Navy flying, particularly in the early training stages, but even just normal carrier operations, particularly in that time period, enormous number of people who never got shot down, but they died landing carriers and training.

NG: In, yes, accidents.

BT: Particularly in the beginning of the war. Earlier in the war, of course, you're not there until ...

NG: Well, even without a carrier I've heard of more, you know, more accidents.

KP: Flying was incredibly dangerous. I mean, just to set foot on a plane you really were taking your life in your hands, just reading about how many accidents there were. ... Even when I interviewed pilots, or people who worked on the bases, they're just always talking about accidents.

NG: Yes. Well, there were more people lost now in accidents in the service than in combat, at least, that's what my son-in-law says.

KP: But going back, you enlisted. When did you report to boot camp?

NG: The week after I graduated.

KP: What was this experience like?

NG: I remember the first day.

BT: You went to Hunter, I assume, Hunter College.

NG: Yes. ... We had a sort of a, you know, place where you, I don't know where we gathered, but whether we went up en masse [on] the subway or what, but it was on the subway, and you got your uniforms issued in one big place ...

KP: ... You've probably seen in movies and might have heard, was your induction very similar to men's?

NG: It wasn't quite as impersonal.

KP: You didn't ...

BT: I wondered about that.

NG: But I remember thinking that I had made a terrible mistake. This is the first day. Oh, but, I volunteered so, well, tough it out. But I found a letter I wrote to my mother the first week and I said, "The Navy is wonderful. They have these nice, big, fluffy towels with US Navy on it." Now, I think part of that was true. Well, you know, how it is, you always have doubts about things that are new, and I had never lived en masse with that many people, and it was, they had five or six people crowded into an apartment. ... There was one smoking room and that's where I learned to smoke, because you had two smoking periods a day, and ... you couldn't go to the smoking room and not smoke so I always smoked a lot then. ... You know, there was a lot of what I called "nonsense stuff," and I would think, "My God, I came from a liberal arts school with a degree and they had the honor system," and here they wouldn't trust anybody, especially if you were enlisted. ... So you just sort of shifted over your point of view to things. ... The only funny thing, I thought it was funny at the time, it was not a pre-induction physical, it was like a post-induction, about a week or so out, and, you know, it was all this routine stuff and you did it in groups, and it was like being herded, you know, around.

KP: So you did have it similarly to men. Men were herded and ...

NG: No. ... You didn't have to cut off all your hair, just some of it. ... We got to this, she was a lieutenant commander who looked very stern, and she was supposed to be the base shrink, I guess. She said, you had to go around and [answer] certain questions, like how many years of school you had and, you know, the date of this and that and there were about four things in each person. ... I thought, "Boy, this is dumb. I've already filled out all these forms," so I just sort of tuned out. ... It got to me, and I said, "I'm sorry I don't remember the question." ... I had to stay after school along with the girl who fainted over her blood test. ... She said, "You know, do you always do that?" I said, "Well, no, I just wasn't paying attention," and she said, "You're gonna be in big trouble if you don't start [focusing]." ... I had a habit of daydreaming when bored. I mean, I did that in college. I mean, I don't know, who doesn't, but I never got caught at it, and I didn't realize I was psychologically unfit. ... I was really scared, you know, it was a "wait and see," and it was sort of like being treated like a child and, at the same, time being an adult, and you didn't, so you could keep on pretending, you know, playing sailor and that sort of thing. Everybody was pretty much gung-ho, really committed to this.

KP: The women who joined, did you have any sense of why they had joined? Some might have done it out of just sheer patriotism, others because they got a chance to join the Navy, which normally wouldn't have been an option, others to get away from home.

NG: I would guess it was mostly something new to do and, you know, you mix that in. I mean, this was a just war and it was the thing to do and all the men were going, and if you felt that we should participate equally, it was the chance to look heroic, or something. ... The WAVE officers I knew were in communications, and I thought, "Oh, I'm glad I didn't get a commission." You'd be doing this, taking messages all day. I think what we were doing was fairly interesting.

BT: Yes. You really did a lot of interesting ...

NG: You were working with people. The training's good. The Navy training methods are excellent, and everybody still says they are. They just have very good training methods.

BT: Obviously, you took a battery of tests at some point in the training process at Hunter, and somehow they decided that you would be good as a link trainer operator.

NG: Well ... you get to pick three things that you might like to do.

BT: Oh, okay, and that was ...

NG: ... My first was control tower operator and link trainer was the second. I've forgotten what the third was.

BT: So you did have some preference. I didn't realize you could select a preference.

NG: Yes, yes.

BT: That's interesting.

NG: ... There was a girl in our group, in our link trainer's school who had been a secretary and that's what she wanted to be. She wanted to go to yeoman's school, 'cause that's what she was good at and she was getting excellent grades. She was good at what she was doing, but she did not want to do that. I thought that was interesting.

BT: You didn't always get placed where you wanted. Was there anything in particular they were looking for? I mean, I've heard about link trainer operators, whether it was having a college education, or some science background, or a good voice.

NG: I don't know.

BT: Did you get a sense that there was a reason that they thought you were a good match?

NG: I once had to give, I don't know, was it was a voice lessons, or what, to this guy who just washed out of Annapolis, I think, and so they were sending him to be a link trainer instructor. It was somebody with a bad voice, and they thought that, since I'd done radio work, I guess that would ...

BT: That's what I'm wondering.

NG: ... therefore make me, and the thing is my radio voice was not, was often a character type. It wasn't necessarily well modulated, but I guess, you know, you sort of learn to fit in. So I found out that I had this ...

BT: This voice.

NG: ... I was supposed to teach somebody how to get their voice pitched right, and I had, didn't have a clue about how to do this, you know ... but it was, you know, there was a lot of variety. ... Then where we were, there was, not a lot of work, but at least it was with young, not old fashion pilots. But they were, you know, it was exciting, and it was "off we go into the wild blue yonder." ... They'd buzz the field when they went out to the carriers, and then they'd, you know, almost hit the roof of the WAVES barracks. It was just like, it was better than the movies, better than the movies.

BT: Did you ever encounter any of the fellows, well, I guess, I don't know. I guess that depends on whether you were getting them and training them from the beginning, or whether there was a refresher. Of course, you said they came in from carriers and regrouped.

NG: Yes.

BT: But did you ever get any fellows that, when they closed the lid on the link trainer, were claustrophobic?

NG: Claustrophobic.

BT: I mean, I heard that ...

NG: No, I didn't ...

BT: Nobody just went ...

NG: No, I hadn't heard of it. I think they'd all had to do it before.

BT: They'd all had it before you ...

NG: ... See, what we were ... teaching the sort of basic routine stuff, which they never really used. They would tell us what you use on a carrier was something like ... We had one operation called ZB, and it was a rotating signal and that's what they used on a carrier. That's when there wasn't

regular sounds. One of the officers decided we didn't have anything much to do, so he taught us some kind of navigational things, like square searches ... and that's the first time I realized that you might not be able to find your ship when you're out there. ... I just can't remember any of the fellows talking much about their experience. Some seemed more serious than others. Some had a hardy drinking life, well, not all ...

KP: I'm just sort of curious, you mentioned before you were stationed in Wildwood, you went to Georgia for specialized training.

NG: Yes.

KP: How long did your boot camp experience last?

NG: I think that was six or eight weeks, and the training school was four to six weeks and the first two weeks, though, we had to volunteer for the mess hall. Before they brought us off the train from New York, these two women got on and said, "We need ten volunteers." There were two people who said, "Well, we won't volunteer." ... There were dozens, so it worked out, and that was the way they got their cheap labor and that's why I just ...

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE-----

KP: When you were in boot camp, did you do firefighting?

NG: No, not in our ...

KP: What ...

NG: The regular, you know, the guys had it, I think.

KP: Yes. Well, what did you do besides marching and indoctrination and Navy protocol and so forth? What sticks out in terms of what you learned in boot camp?

NG: I don't remember what we learned. It wasn't skills. Now, when my husband was in boot camp, they had to do some rowing and they did some firefighting and, you know, more ship things that you would use. ... We probably had, you know, general orientation, but the people who didn't go to any school, I guess, became messenger persons.

KP: It sounds like it was much more textbook type learning in classroom indoctrination.

NG: Yes, it wasn't, well, since there was no shipboard work ...

KP: Yes.

NG: ... I think the specialty training was, you know, after boot camp. ... I can't remember too much about boot camp, except bouncing quarters on your bed. You had tight [beds], and, see, it all

seems silly. I mean, it seems silly if you're an adult doing this, but it was different then. ... Just everybody did it that way and you did it right.

KP: What about the uniforms? How comfortable were your uniforms?

NG: Oh, they were good.

KP: You liked your uniforms.

NG: Yes. They were comfortable and they were good-looking, and on our base, you could wear slacks.

BT: Oh, you could. That's interesting.

KP: Oh, you could wear slacks?

NG: Now, the girls did. The sailors wore jeans and denim shirts. ... I don't remember seeing any of the girls, but maybe there, see, most of the women were in things like, the ones who didn't work in an office wearing skirts were control tower and gunnery instructors, and they may have, I don't remember. ... It was fairly easy, and on a small base you didn't have to be too fussy, except once in a while, we would have hat wearing week, and everybody would get, if you didn't have your hat on you'd get stopped. But we had a period of the WAVES barracks being restricted, because people didn't get up on time. What they did for a couple of weeks, the master-at-arms would go around with a little book and check on whether you were out of bed at whatever time it was. ... The main thing was to get to your job on time, which was eight o'clock, and getting up time was six or six-thirty, and we finally figured out what was going on. ... So you were restricted to the barracks, or the base, or something for a week, or depending on how many points you had made. ... The WAVES officer thought this up, 'cause it was the only disciplining she ever did, I mean, I don't remember seeing her more than once, and she was supposed to be in charge of the WAVES.

KP: This is in Wildwood.

NG: Yes.

BT: And you never saw much of her.

NG: Her name was Mugsy McGuire, Mrs. McGuire, and she chased all the ensigns ...

KP: The manizer.

NG: The manizer, yes, and so we thought she had something to give them work to do. ... But she relented after a while. You had to be in bed at a certain time, and we would all sing riotous songs, like, you know, it's like kids in camp. ... So that didn't get very far. But most everybody, you know, went to work, did their job, behaved.

BT: Did you have a separate mess, WAVES mess? You ate with the other ...

NG: No, we ate with anybody.

BT: Well, you didn't have, how many WAVES officers really were there? Was it just her?

NG: I think there were, well, there was just, as far as I know, there may have been some at the administration building, but there were some Navy nurses and they were terrible. I had a friend who had trench mouth and she was in the sickbay, and Saturday they'd have inspection and she said she had to sit up in bed at attention. ... There were all these stories about, you know, running for a bus and this Navy nurse would say, "I'm an officer." ... Of course, we tended to label the Navy nurses, because there were more of them and I guess they felt more separate and unequal. ... See, a lot of the WAVES there either had college degrees, or had been to college. I mean, these were not a bunch of dummies. There was one dummy, but she survived somehow. ... After the war, we kept in touch, with several of us, for a long time. ... I'm still in touch with a friend of mine in New York, and we talk about the olden days. ... See, the head of our department in the Navy was a poet by, that was his trade, and he won a Pulitzer Prize later ...

KP: Do you remember his name or?

NG: Richard Eberhart, so I have this book that's called *War and the Poet* and it's about war poets. ... His picture's on there flying his kites. See, that was one of the ones he had taken, standing there flying this kite. ... He was a perfectly capable officer, but he just had an aesthetic view of things, which was nice. ... The funny thing is ... somebody got a hold of his latest book of poems ... and they'd bring these about in, you know, target practice ... under rocket light, and they'd all laugh and say, "Education doesn't carry you anyplace." But he was very nice. ... Anyway, this friend of mine, who lives in New York, said she went to a poetry reading at the Y that he was doing, and she went up and said, you know, "You remember me?" but he didn't. Well, I don't think he would ...

BT: Yes, even though it was a small base.

NG: Yes.

BT: Unless there was some particular reason, you know, why would he?

NG: He had a dippy blond wife. I don't know whether it was his real wife, or his second, or third wife, but I thought that she didn't fit in with this scholastic type. ...

KP: Going back to the specialized school, you mentioned you worked in the cafeteria for two weeks.

NG: Yes, that was our non-volunteer.

KP: Non-volunteering volunteer.

NG: That's how they got their ...

KP: And then you were in specialized training.

NG: Yes.

KP: How long did that last, again?

NG: It was over four weeks, it may have been six or eight, and we got to Wildwood in November, so if I started in September, it was about that. ... Then we got to Wildwood in October. They had already pulled up the sidewalks in Wildwood when we got there, and it was fall and ...

KP: Empty.

NG: ... empty.

KP: I'm curious about your going to Atlanta, because the South was very segregated. Did you notice that when you went?

NG: Well, I had heard about this, 'cause I had a friend who had had a husband in a southern camp, and she insisted on sitting in the back of the bus, or anyplace she wanted. The living quarters, the Navy was segregated. I mean, not in Wildwood, it wasn't. In Atlanta, they had a separate chow line, and they had separate barracks, I guess. In Wildwood, most of the black sailors were mess cooks, or something like that, or, yes, server-types. There was one who was a gunnery instructor.

KP: Really.

BT: That's interesting.

NG: He wasn't an officer, but he was one of the ...

KP: He was a gunnery instructor. Were there any black WAVES? Did you encounter any?

NG: I don't think they ever enlisted any. I never ...

KP: You never encountered any.

NG: No.

BT: There were so few that you probably wouldn't ...

NG: I understand that the Navy was the last, what was it? The Air Force was the first to integrate their service, but ...

BT: The WAVES, yes. The Navy was slow, no question.

NG: ... My husband's family was in Norfolk, Virginia. ... Now, you saw how things worked there, and it became accepted. That was just the way they did it. And another thing I noticed, that the, they weren't POWs, but the guys in the brig on the base ...

KP: Yes, the prisoners.

NG: ... all had striped uniforms, see, and they were mostly black. ... They would march them out to the flag raising ceremony in the morning, where they would all stand around looking solemn, at attention, solemnly at attention, and it was like special duty. That's what you get out to raise the flag, and I don't know why we thought it was funny. I just thought a lot of things were, well, a lot of things seemed funny. But that's the way they did it. Nobody noticed these things then.

KP: Men who were in uniform often comment on how much respect they got being in uniform. People would, total strangers, would invite them to dinner. They had no problem often going to small towns where there weren't a lot of GIs, getting a date. What about as a woman in uniform? Did you get a sense that people really appreciated your contribution?

NG: I don't remember that. I didn't feel that I was separated out or, you know. I had a friend who was in the WACS, and she said they were more looked down on. But I had heard that ...

BT: Yes, I had wondered about that, 'cause there was an active campaign against them.

NG: There was?

BT: Yes, called the slander campaign. It was deliberate.

NG: But we didn't have that, you know, that trouble.

BT: Did you ever have people come up if you were in uniform, in transit, or whatever ... and talk to you and say, "Oh, you're in the Navy?"

NG: I don't remember that so much.

BT: There were so many people in uniform maybe it didn't strike ...

KP: ... A number of the men were just very struck at how people were really inviting to them. One guy said how he was invited for Passover observances. These total strangers that approached him in the subway ... station, he never met before, and invited him to come over to their house, and he was thinking, "I'm a total stranger. I just happen to be in uniform. You would never normally do this."

NG: ... Yes ... I don't know whether it didn't happen with women, but I don't remember.

KP: Yes, I just curious if it was different.

NG: You know, socially you sort of were on your own, and you had liberty once a week, twice a week, I don't know, every other weekend, one weekend a month. Anyway, the thing to do was to go into town and most people went to a bar. There was a movie. There were restaurants and there was a bowling alley and I guess there was a USO. ... When my husband came to visit from boot camp and we had this evening to spend together, we would go, well, we did go to the movies. First, we would go and have coffee. Then we'd go someplace and have a beer. Then we'd go someplace and eat something. ... Then we'd, I don't know, we tried a little of everything. It was hard staying warm, because it was November, I think, and it was not a good social setting. But I knew a lot of women who would just go and drink at bars, and I was still not twenty-one. So I would have to get people to order for me, and I wasn't a drinker anyway, I mean, I didn't quite know how. But we went out with a couple of girls, who went out to get blasted, and even though I'd been at Douglass for four years, drinking at Douglass was very limited. In the first place, there wasn't a lot of money, and wherever people went, they, well, I never went along, because I didn't want to go drink with, I wanted to be in the group ... But in the Navy, we'd go out because it was the only thing to do, and you learned how big girls ... It was sort of silly. When I think that it was sort of silly, it was, you know, it's like any social situation, and not many people dated and there just wasn't a lot to do.

BT: Yes, Wildwood is kind of isolated. Well, a lot of places probably were, but ...

NG: In the winter, it really was.

BT: Yes.

NG: There wasn't much going on.

BT: Now in the summer, were you there during the summer?

NG: Yes, I was in there in, yes, that first summer. I was there was when the war was over, at the end, and, well, we didn't go into town very much. We'd go, if you had a day off, no, you never, had a weekend off. If you were going to the beach, you go in the, we had beach parties.

BT: Yes, I would think at least you could do that.

NG: ... We'd have group ones. I have a picture of this, you want to see my pictures, of the whole training department at the beach having a good time. You can't tell they, you know, we just had a good time. They just corralled the food and commandeered the food. ... It was a certain group spirit, I think, and, you know, that was good, because not many people are thrown in with that. I think the first place I got it was at Douglass, but I didn't think I was getting "group spirit."

BT: At Douglass.

KP: You had, for example, you had to wear a beanie and you had class dresses and so forth.

NG: Yes. Yes. It was the first time I got into sort of a place where there was, you know, a format for belonging, and, you know, that was good. And when I say "it was good," it was a good experience to have. The Navy was just entirely different, but it was, in Atlanta we had a, what was our barracks like? It was a big, barny place. There were several cubicles ... and just lots and lots of people, and it was pretty, when I say "barny," it was, you know, it was okay ...

KP: What would be a typical day be like at Wildwood? You mentioned you had a hard time getting up in the morning.

NG: Well, they just decided they weren't going to. You know, the master-at-arms is the person who runs the barracks and we had two. One was a sort of fundamentalist-type person who did everything right. She wouldn't even buy cigarettes for you ... I mean, she really was good.

BT: By the book.

NG: ... The other woman was nice, but she was, you know, doing the right thing. So ... one seemed sort of goody-good, and you had to be to work at eight and you went to breakfast in the mess hall. ... The first thing we did when we got to work was make coffee, and we got out the coffee maker, and that was the first thing of the day, is to make the coffee. ... We had too many people in our department, so we were over-complemented. ... We managed to get the eager beavers to take all the pilots, and we would play gin rummy, or sorted things. It was, being bored is not a good way to keep mentally fit, but, you know, they had just gotten things messed up. ... It was generally, it was one building and we all got along.

BT: So you weren't under a lot of stress. I mean, obviously, you weren't understaffed.

NG: ... We always knew people who knew how to get things, like, you know, fresh lemonade. It's always something, a wheeler-dealer in every group who gets the fresh lemons and ice.

BT: Going on in wartime.

KP: Because there was rationing going on.

NG: Yes, you knew it when you got home, though. Yes, I went to, I went to New York once. If you gave a pint of blood in Philadelphia, you could get forty-eight hours, or something like that. So we went to New York, and they wouldn't take mine, because I didn't weigh a 110 then. ... So I got in free and I went into get cigarettes and asked for, I don't know whatever, Luckies or Chesterfields. They said, "All we have is Wings," and I said, "Wings, what's that?" ... There just weren't cigarettes available.

BT: You were used to the ...

NG: Yes, whatever we wanted. ... It was like a working day and people did their wash, and, you know, there was a laundry in the barracks and they even built us a barbecue outside so we could have picnics. I don't think it got used much. ... One time, we were going to have a party and we

called Mugsy McGuire to see if we could have beer. You could have beer in the ship's service, but you couldn't bring it. No, she didn't think that would be a good idea, so it was a dry party. ... I would hear about how the infirmary, they would have parties with, what'd they use? It wasn't wood alcohol, it was whatever ...

BT: I've heard. There's some kind of alcohol.

NG: ... Out on the base you'd hear about parties where they used what they call, "torpedo juice." It was probably some kind of fuel thing. I never got invited to those parties, thank goodness. ... It was, you know, a regular day. ... You had duty in the officer of the day's office once in a while, and you had to read the instructions and there were things to do if there was a crash. ... There was once when I was on duty, and you had to read the list of people to call. ... There was an officer present so that if you really panicked, and so that was unusual. You weren't exactly, I mean, you weren't trained for it. Somebody said they had guard duty once. I don't know if it was my husband. He said the gun had never been fired, that he [had] for side arms.

KP: In fact, they didn't have bullets. They had these side arms. You mentioned there was a crash and you were in the office that day. What happened? I mean, was the person killed?

NG: There were frequent crashes. What was this? Was it night [or] daytime? You had to get the location. You had to call the base officer and the officer of the day and somebody else and the fire engines. They would, you know, send equipment out, but you didn't have to do anything else except read the list and see what you were supposed to do and then hear what happened. ... Sometimes people were just injured, and sometimes the plane would catch on fire and sometimes lots of things. There was one, the famous case of Ensign Cyr, whose the hatch on his plane flew back and it cut off part of his ear, and they were going to send him to have a plastic surgery in Philadelphia, but he said, "No," he'd do without it, 'cause he wanted to stay with his squadron. It didn't look too bad. That was ... the most mayhem we had, and it was sort of like living in a separate world. ... The officers lived off base, well, the married ones did. ... One night, we got a call when we were in the officer of the day's office from the captain. The captain was having a party and "to send lemons and a motion picture projector," and that was the first kind of graft I ever had, not graft. What do you call it?

KP: Using the privileges.

NG: Using the privileges. ... When they were going to pack up the link trainers at the end of the war, an officer came in and asked the chief there, "Take all the eight day clocks out of the trainers." Now, that's called stealing where I come from, but that was overlooked. ... Then one of the chefs in the mess hall was caught taking butter off the base and he got, I don't know whether he got court-martialled, there was uneven justice. ... I think you notice those little things.

KP: The butter thing, was that before the war ended?

NG: Yes.

BT: He could probably sell it on the black market or whatever.

NG: Yes, whatever.

BT: If there was such a thing.

NG: I don't know how much butter had been taken, but it's just that it depends upon if you're going to apply the rules and where you are and they're different in different places. I mean, the application of the rules is different in different places, and my husband said in Washington, DC, nobody ever saluted on the street, 'cause there were so many officers. ... I think there was a sense of, you know, it wasn't just daily work. It was because they were going to be active squadrons there, and they were sort of a separate entity, because they had their own commander. As a matter-of-fact, they had their own chaplain. I mean, it was a base chaplain and then another one. The base chaplain floated between Cape May and us. ... We must have had a Southern Baptist in there and I wasn't anything at the time. ... In boot camp, you had to go to chapel, or whatever they called it. It was in the Hunter College outdoor amphitheater and in the summer it was hot. ... If you were Catholic, you got marched to church and could be inside, but everybody else had to go to this. ... The funny thing was that I had never gotten into church-going much. ... The best ones, preachers, were the rabbis and the priests. For some reason, they seemed to humanize their talk more.

KP: And the Protestant ministers were really ...

NG: Well, maybe I had some prejudice, I don't know. I would just sort of look at them and say, "Oh, I don't know if he's good."

KP: It's interesting 'cause I often think of the Protestant traditions as having really strong preachers, but it doesn't always work ...

NG: It all depends upon the denomination.

KP: Yes.

NG: You don't think of Catholic priests as preaching.

KP: A number of ...

NG: They give talks, or something like that.

KP: I guess a number of Catholics have mentioned that, who've gone to Protestant services, how a lot of Protestant churches really make it an art, whereas ...

NG: Yes.

BT: It's the main thing.

KP: It's interesting that you'd find that actually the Catholic priests in these chapels services were ... better.

NG: Well, it all depended on the individual.

KP: Yes.

NG: ... I don't know whether chaplains got drafted, or if they volunteered. But I remember, I'm a Presbyterian, and in our Presbytery, we had one minister who was a reserve chaplain. ... During the Vietnam War, when someone said to him, "How can you do that?" And he said, "Well, someone has to." I understand from my son-in-law, who he was on a ship, and he said, "Well ..." He was having some theological questions, and I said, "Well, why don't you go talk to the chaplain?" ... He said, "Well, the chaplain is a cross between the librarian and the morale officer." I said, "There must be some chaplain around you can talk to." ... I don't know how it is normally, but we never went to the chaplain if we wanted help. We went to the Red Cross, 'cause they gave money ... you know, they would actually help people.

BT: Yes.

NG: ... It was tended to be sort of a joke, and if you weren't anything in particular, and it wasn't a foxhole-type mentality, you sort of ... I went to a wedding that the Catholic chaplain did, and you could see his leg shaking like that.

BT: Don't do anything ...

NG: My friend's Catholic.

BT: I was thinking, you know, in terms of personal crisis, or whatever, if there were any incidences of people, I don't know, husbands that were killed, or girls who got pregnant, or, you know, little dramas.

NG: Little dramas?

BT: Little scandals, little dramas. You get that many people in one place, and, I mean, that's true in a college dorm, or anywhere else. I was just wondering if there was anything you remember in particular about ...

NG: I don't remember off-hand. I had a friend who got pregnant, but she was married.

BT: But she was married.

NG: ... Then she went off the base to find a, you know, to see a doctor, 'cause she didn't want to get out until a certain time.

BT: Yes, so what was the rule with that, if you remember?

NG: I don't know what the rule was. She wanted to wait until her husband transferred to a base where they could, you know, live, or settle down, or whatever.

BT: Would she have had to leave the Navy if she got pregnant?

NG: I think you had a choice. See, now things are different. I've got a son-in-law who's in the Navy in South Carolina, and he was working with women personnel who were pregnant and he seemed to be the one they leaned on. There were two people and James is very tall and big and probably looks like he can take care of things. But I thought, "How can they be in the service and get pregnant? Who's gonna take care of the kid?" But I guess that's a modern day question that nobody asks anymore. ...

BT: Did you feel like that the WAVES officers, or enlisted, were, this was later in the war, but you know, that, for instance, chief petty officers accepted women in the Navy? I mean, early on there were some ...

NG: We didn't have trouble. See, I was in '44 or '45, which was really later, I guess, and it depended on where you were, but, you know, if anything, I think WAVES had preferential treatment.

BT: That's interesting.

NG: Well, we had things the guys didn't have. We had cubicles and they had open barracks.

BT: That's true.

NG: We had cubicles with little cubbies and things, and we had washing machines. I don't know where they washed their clothes, maybe they didn't, but their lives were much more limited. I mean, when my husband and I got married he was stationed in Washington, DC, and he had to get his own, you know, clean his own clothes. So he wears his best uniform, and he, you scrub the stripes with a toothbrush. The stripes on your collar are white and his rating badge ran, so they were a slightly pink. ... He said, "Oh, I don't know that it's noticeable." But it was one of those little things ...

BT: Little thing, yes.

NG: ... You know, I understand that there were some U-boats that surfaced around there. In Cape May, they had a coast guard station, and they'd watch for things and planes that would go out and look for them, but you didn't have a sense of immediacy. You know what I mean?

KP: So the war felt, even when you were in the Navy, it sounds like the war felt very distant.

NG: Distant. Yes, yes. ... I guess we knew some people who were overseas. My husband had a lot of friends who were overseas. The best man at our wedding lost his leg at Germany ... but he

didn't mind 'cause he was ... getting out. ... I knew of two fighter pilots who were shot down over there, and I ... knew them slightly, but that's the closest I came, as far as realizing, you know, there was a real war. Now, when we had the Gulf War, because it was so politicized, you really read about it and read about the potential and what really happened, what didn't. I felt ... closer to it. Well, I wasn't for it, and I wasn't in places where you could say that too easily, and, you know, it was not one of the things you were against. But in the war we were in, you know, everybody ...

BT: Everybody was for it.

NG: Everybody was. ... I don't know whether there was much anti-German feeling. We had German prisoners of war in a camp near us and they did mosquito control. ... The interesting thing is they had neat uniforms that all looked new, and ... when it rained, they had nice pith helmets and they had trench coats. ... See, the sailors would have lost their raincoats by that time, or just not wear them so. But they were really organized. ... We had one man who was helping. He did some mechanical work. He was really nice and somebody bought him cigarettes, and he was guarded by somebody with a machine gun. Why would you want to leave? He was really a nice young man. ... There was just no fear, because we weren't near anything treacherous ...

BT: There was no bombing of the East Coast.

NG: I don't, just don't think we heard of things.

KP: As a WAVE, you didn't have to do guard duty, did you?

NG: No, only in the officer of the day's office.

KP: That was the equivalent of ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... guard duty. So you didn't have to do the guard, 'cause a lot of the sailors have talked about doing the mindless sort of ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... guard duty ...

NG: Yes, that would be.

KP: ... particularly people in Great Lakes. That was a distinct memory.

NG: Of doing that.

KP: Doing guard duty late at night.

NG: Night. It seems to me my husband did that once, and it seems really scary. But I think I've learned more about the Navy from my son-in-law, who was a, on a subtender, and his attitude toward the military was he does everything just right. Well, he's out of the Navy now. ... He said he rationalized his duty, as he was an electronic technician major, or something like that, that at least he was working on equipment for subs that had to do with the safety of the personnel. [It] didn't have to do with nuclear war. I thought that was, well, he wanted a career and he did well, but he was disillusioned by, oh, I guess the, whatever you're disillusioned by. You know, routine things and not getting credit for good things you do and having people messing up and having people goofing off. ... I think the general morale now in the Navy is, you know, he said he was on a ship where there was just not any discipline, so people could make mistakes. He went over to the Near East, or something, but whatever ship he was on he said the, whoever was running it just didn't run a tight ship. ... Of course, peacetime, it really is peacetime, and, of course, you say, "Well, it could happen from time to time." ... I got the general impression that James thought things, people did not run a tight ship, but he's the kind of person who does, except in his own home, my daughter says.

KP: It sounds like you and your husband could, I mean you both were in the Navy, so you could both really share stories. I mean, you knew a lot of what he was talking about.

NG: Yes. Now, he had a different experience.

KP: Yes, it was a very different experience.

NG: He had more fun, actually. He went to Hawaii.

BT: Oh, well.

KP: But also you can relate to your son-in-law.

NG: Yes.

KP: I mean ... it's a different Navy, but certain things ...

NG: Yes, I know what he's talking about. ... Also, he's, when I say "sincere," and he really wanted to do a good job, [which] probably doesn't really go over too well with general personnel, being around somebody that wants to do a good job ...

KP: And so how long has he been in the Navy?

NG: Well, he's out now. He was in, gee, I don't even remember. Four years? He had a full hitch, plus ...

KP: But he decided to get out and ...

NG: No, they cut personnel down, and he was in Charleston ...

KP: Oh, so he ...

NG: ... at the Navy base, and they cut back on their personnel. So now he finally has a job where he's doing what he was trained to do. I mean, he can use his Navy training. ... I think he went in because he had had a poor experience in college, just did not function well academically. He found out, or his wife thinks, that he was dyslexic, or slightly, so he couldn't pass certain things. But in the Navy he could, you know, compensate by, you know, re-teaching himself directions and things, and he wanted to learn something he could use as a skill. So he's doing that and that's good, and it's good to have a job these days.

BT: Well, that's true. When the war was over, did you want to stay in the Navy, or you just knew from the beginning that you didn't, or couldn't?

NG: Well, the war was over in the first place. There was no particular motivation. They were going to eventually shut the base down, so by that time my husband was on his way to Hawaii, where they were not going to send me anyway, and so I went home to Mother. ... I mean, we lived with my folks for three years, and, believe it or not, we're still married. You know, it worked out. It was fine.

KP: Well, housing was very scarce.

BT: A lot of people did.

NG: Also, I think we also had between us about four hundred dollars and some war bonds, and my father kept saying, "Well, that's all right, you know. The housing market's going to get better," and we believed him. We just saved our money until we got [a house].

KP: Did you use the GI Bill mortgage? Did you ever buy a house?

NG: Yes.

KP: You used it for your house?

NG: For our house. But under the GI Bill you have to have, they make you do certain things that weren't normally required. ... It just took a little extra time, and, you know, that worked out. And I used the education part.

BT: Yes, I wondered about that.

NG: When did I use it? Oh, I used it in various ways, as I went to ...

KP: 'Cause you went to Columbia a little bit.

NG: Yes, the School of General Studies. I took typing and shorthand, first, so I could get a job, and then I took short story writing ...

KP: And you took a summer session at Rutgers.

NG: Oh, yes. That was my vocational training. That was the summer that I was pregnant with our first child and I had just finished teaching school, and so I took education courses so I could go teach school later ... but you know they would never give me credit for those, because for my teaching, practical teaching, because it was the seventh and eighth grade, not sixth and seventh. It was the wrong groups of grades, so I sort of gave up the idea of that. ... So I took these two courses, and one of the ... professors offered me a job, and I was, let's see, when was it? It was August and Peter was born in October. ... You know what I said to him? I said, "Oh, no, I'm going to be busy this fall," and I thought, "If you don't notice I'm pregnant, I'm not going to tell you." [laughter]

BT: He didn't notice, or he didn't ...

NG: I guess he was, they were then recruiting. There were girls in the class, who were right out of Douglass, who were going to have to teach reading and elementary school. They didn't have any teacher training.

BT: Oh, wow.

KP: Because of the shortages of teachers.

NG: I guess at that time it must have been. Well, Peter was born in '49, so it must have been then. ... I went to teach and I didn't know how to teach anything, but it was a private school and I was known. I got introduced to the classroom the day that the then teacher was banging for order on the desk and I thought, "I can do that well." [laughter]

KP: But it must have helped that you had actually gone to this school.

NG: Oh, yes. Yes.

KP: You had a sense of, that things were ...

NG: I really liked doing that. I met my English teacher on the subway. That's how I got the job. She said, "Oh," and I was looking around for [a job] ... I had been working at Doubleday as a clerical person. It was really boring. I was never gonna make manager, or something, and she said, "Why don't you come up and talk to the principal?" So I did and I got the job.

BT: Wow.

NG: ... It was the best two years of my life. I really, you know, you never find out if you're going to be good at something, or would like it, unless you do it really, and I never would have picked it. All my friends who took education courses in college said they'd never teach. They'd taught long

enough to get certified. But I have a son who was never able to afford to teach. I mean, he has the credits. He loves children. He would like to teach in elementary school, and he can't afford to ... stop [his] current job. I think that's sort of unfortunate. You know, it may have been his choice that he took a make-money and support-your-family job, but there aren't too many people who really would like to teach and who really like kids. He's the best father I've seen. You know better than anybody else we know. He just has a natural inclination, has a real feel for kids, not just his own.

BT: Now that's a gift.

NG: It is.

BT: It's a shame because so many of them don't and we just don't reward teaching, although it's better than it was. I mean, years ago, teachers really made almost nothing.

NG: Yes, yes.

BT: It's different now. I had one question about the GI Bill, and that is how well informed you were as a member of the WAVES ...

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO-----

KP: This continues an interview with Mrs. Nancy P. Godfrey on February 14, 1997 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kurt Piehler and ...

BT: Barbara Tomblin.

KP: I think some of that got cut off ...

BT: We were talking about the GI Bill.

KP: ... And how you learned about the GI Bill.

NG: I think they gave us a lot of literature, so I had it and I knew it was available and I knew how to use it.

KP: Do you think you would have used it even if your husband hadn't known too about the GI ...

NG: Oh, yes, yes. I would have used it.

KP: Did your husband use the GI Bill?

NG: I can't remember. He took some courses on his own after he was at Rutgers, but I don't think it was under that, just independently after he started to work. He took economics and he got better marks than he ever did at Rutgers, you know, loved it.

BT: One of the things that I think we're both curious about is how being in the military in World War II may have informed the rest of your life. Were any of the skills that you knew as a link trainer operator, or any of the things that happened, turn out to be useful, or change your outlook? You were a teacher, so.

NG: I think I sort of found out what I liked doing ... in teaching. That was really my first exposure to teaching.

BT: Yes, 'cause it really was like teaching.

NG: Yes. You got ... some feeling that you were doing something useful, even if you had to wonder why sometimes, but you accepted, you know, that's the way it was. ... You know, I sometimes thought, "Well, what did I get out of that?" But I think any different experience is broadening and you get to know a number of different kinds of people and different situations and it takes so long to grow up and get you a rest in between ...

KP: You also ... Oh, I'm sorry.

NG: No, between college and real life.

KP: You also mentioned that it's given you this bond with these men ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... that you probably never would have had. I mean, they really, you mentioned they really open up to you when they find you were Navy.

NG: Oh, yes. ... There was this one man that I knew through an entirely different situation, and he had his flight jacket on and it looked pretty new. ... I said, "Oh, were you in the Navy?" ... He said, "Yes, my family gave me this for my, I don't know, fiftieth birthday or something." ... I figured he was about ten years older than I was, and he died last year, but he really loved talking about his experience in the Navy. Yes, so I'd tell him what I did, and we would have this little private thing that we knew. Even his wife, after he died, didn't know that we had talked about that, not that it was anything bad. It was just, you know, the thing we knew about that and you just come across, especially Navy pilots. We had a minister in our Presbytery who was a Navy pilot, and he became a minister because he cracked up a plane and broke his leg and they wanted to put him on a desk, or something and he didn't want to do, so I don't know how that led to the ministry. Well, he said that his father had been a pilot and he'd cracked up a plane. ... I'm always interested in what other people have done, 'cause I had never been really interested in airplanes too much, but the first day I got to a base where they had planes, let me tell you it was like a romantic novel. It was the sunset and it was taking off. ... They weren't anything like the ones today. ... I think people just are attracted to certain parts of that.

KP: Where was the first base where you saw the planes?

NG: No, it was Atlanta.

KP: In Atlanta.

NG: They had a naval air station. They had several schools there ...

KP: Did you ever fly at all when you were in the Navy? Did anyone ever take you up on a ...

NG: Yes, we got this wonderful opportunity. Somebody figured out that the link trainer instructor should have a real life experience, so they arranged for us to go up, oh, it wasn't every month, it was every three months or something, and we'd get flight pay for that. ... So the first time I went up, I got sick in the plane. Well, I never, I could never swing, you know, and, first, you had to get a pilot to take you up and they thought that it was boring. ... This guy was doing slow rolls over Philadelphia and I just really could not handle that at all, and I don't think he thought he was doing me a favor. I think it was some kind of bad joke. So then I got out of the plane and I went to the barracks and I went to sleep, and somebody came knocking on the door and you have to clean up your own cockpit. That was the first reality check I had. They give you a bucket and stuff ... so the next time I brought a bag, paper bag.

KP: Did you get sick again?

BT: You actually went back.

NG: I think the second time I did, but I dropped the bag over Philadelphia. Well, you couldn't drop it in the ... I had a friend who took her knitting bag, not to throw up into, but because she wanted to take pictures, and she took [it] to hide her camera in. ... But that gave you an entirely different feel than a mechanical operation ... but it was good. It was good to do that. We have a carpenter, who does work for us, who was a flight instructor in the Marine Corps and for the Navy, too, and we get long, long tales of things that happened in training, things that happened to him. But it's sort of a, the kind of activity that, I guess, guys like a lot. I don't know. I don't know that many men ... and the pilots I've known, I never would have known they were in the Navy.

BT: No, there's not ...

NG: It just sort of comes up.

KP: It's interesting, 'cause one of the things that you've mentioned is that you really did not have an awareness of aviation, how dangerous it was. It's only recently that many years afterwards that you've really fully realized how dangerous flying was in World War II.

NG: I always thought it was dangerous. Two years ago, well, not dangerous, but I always had trouble on airplanes.

KP: Even today?

NG: I have a feeling that they might drop out of the sky ... but I manage it. ... I'm not one of these people who loves flying, but I manage it.

KP: ... You find it very romantic, or do you still find it ...

NG: I think I've switched to something else. I don't know. I tend to watch Navy movies, even submarine movies, and the idea of being in a submarine absolutely terrifies me. I can't imagine anybody being ...

KP: Yes, well, I have a hard time myself having seen some subs.

NG: Yes.

KP: Walking through them, they're really ...

NG: Cramped space. ... I don't know that there's a carryover, except as a matter-of-fact, I found myself, I wondered if my mother had thrown out all my books about sailing and so on, and I think I just outgrew it, you know, like you do.

BT: All those things.

KP: You mentioned that you became very active in social causes. When did you start becoming very active?

NG: I think it was mostly I was exposed to them in church committees ... Well, it was probably because going through the civil rights period, we both had strong feelings about equality and justice and those neat things, and, you know, we'd heard tapes of what was it? Fannie Lou Hamer. We live in an area where there are activist black groups and some in churches, not necessarily all. ... We got sort of interested in this and Presbyterians were doing some things, and I got on this committee and I didn't know what I was doing. ... It was called the Committee on Church and Race. It was, it must have been in '60s or '70s, and I've forgotten what we were supposed to do, not foment unrest. ... I think we were supposed to get churches involved in particular activities. Mostly the executive wrote position papers on things and didn't get a whole lot done. There was one man on the committee whose wife was a lawyer, so she would come along, and she [would] give us legal advice. She didn't know why on earth we were there, 'cause we really didn't do anything. We just talked, and that was probably a lot of it. But the man who was the paid executive did a lot of running around. He was in Paterson, he got arrested for having a citizens band radio ... and [he] went to court in Paterson. The civil rights issue, some people said they were tired of talking about other people's rights and they wanted everything to settle down. ... I guess we had some friends, you know, Bill works with black engineers, at least one, and you just became aware of the life difficulties ...

KP: So you had colleagues that were black?

NG: Yes, he hired the first black engineer at Exxon, at least at the Bayway refinery, and they became friends, and, you know, since then, it's pretty open.

KP: It sounds like it was tough at first.

NG: Well, then it was tough applying, I don't know. I don't know what the feeling was, and that was certainly a long time ago, 'cause they have grown kids now, who are lawyers, who are successful lawyers.

KP: Yes. What Presbyterian church do you belong to? It sounds like it was sect-wide, the committee you were serving on.

NG: Yes, the Synod of New Jersey, then which included Cuba. ... Now we have the Synod of the Northeast, which is even bigger, and sort of unworkable. But that's what it did then. ... It was the time when it was, you know, people were doing that kind of thing. ... The man who was running the committee then, they ran out of black issues and [it] became ethnic issues. But it was interesting and I'll tell you, when I finally figured, it fed my need for excitement and a just cause, and you know, I loved that. It's sort of like an addiction. ... If you never get to do anything exciting in your youth, you can find a legal way to be exciting someplace else. ... I don't know if you know anything about the Plainfield riots.

KP: I know a little bit about it. Did you become active in any other causes after that, after the civil rights?

NG: Well, now we're really interested in a lot of things, but it mostly comes up, I may say, it comes under being able to talk about issues that are difficult, especially in a church. Our church has become, I would guess you'd say, conservative, and before it had conservative leaders, but it was, you could talk about things. But then all churches have become that way. So we're a little uncomfortable. My husband wrote an editorial for the church newsletter. It was the theme of, you know, we've become two societies, black and white, rich and poor. ... I thought it was good ... and we had had some of the experiences he alluded to. ... He was talking about the society, but then saying it's close to home, because there are jokes about our being surrounded by a Jewish golf course, which I thought was abominable when I heard somebody say this. See, anti-Semitism is my other thing that just sends me absolutely into orbit, and I don't know why I just pick up these things. Well, our grandchildren are Jewish and I've put together what happens. I've seen things about the Holocaust, that was going on and I didn't know it when I was in high school.

BT: Yes.

NG: And nobody looked at it ...

KP: No, go ...

NG: ... you know, so ... currently we have been silenced, because somebody was so upset by this article that they changed the rules for how you would ... Actually, they put up a censorship clause, so why would you bother? You know, he couldn't do it anymore.

KP: What newsletter did it?

NG: It was the church newsletter.

KP: For your local church?

BT: ... Censorship was in your church newsletter?

NG: Well, that's what I called it. I got into writing angry letters and my husband, who's not an angry person, and very seldom speaks out, I mean, I've never seen him so upset. We were talking about leaving, and it was probably the way it was handled. Somebody said, "It was the tone." Well, somebody said to me, "He doesn't mind ruffling a few feathers." But ... some people thought it was good and agreed with it. Anyway, so they made this ruling ... but it got to be the person, who was supposedly in charge, says, you know, "That's not what this is for. This newsletter is for, you know, friends and family and what's going on, not for your personal opinion." Yes, you could have a personal opinion, but you'd have to sneak it in some other way. You know, I just got frustrated.

BT: Yes, it's very interesting. Yes, church newsletters usually are not, the ones I have known, aren't you know, for news, not particularly for letters to the editor, but I never thought about what would happen if ...

NG: He was the editor. He said, "I have a right to do this, 'cause I am the editor."

BT: Yes.

NG: And he's not pompous.

KP: It sounds like one of your sons or daughters is in an inter-faith marriage. You mentioned you had ...

NG: Yes, our oldest son, and the children were raised in a Jewish church. We went to all the barmitzvahs and batmitzvahs, and I was really impressed. When I say impressed, I mean they were spiritually significant, especially for the family. ... When their first child went to Hebrew school, they didn't tell us because they were afraid we'd be offended. I thought that was fine. I think children need to be brought up in something, because if you don't, you're guessing at what you are. ... I spent most of my young adult life not even asking the question about, you know, I learned to spell Presbyterian, because that's what my mother was, and in the days when I went to school, you had to fill that out, you know, what your religion was.

KP: So your mother really, religion wasn't a real emphasis for your mother.

NG: I don't think so until her later years. She had, you know, if you grow up on a narrow-minded place ... Her favorite minister got caught smoking cigars and got canned, and I think that blew her mind ever afterwards, so she leaned more toward the Episcopal church when she found one. She liked their tradition, and also the pastor there used to visit my parents when they were in the hospital. ... You know that makes a big difference. It's the kind of care you get. My sister used to say, "Mother was never like this before," and I said, "Well, this is the time of life people choose."
...

KP: You mentioned you weren't interested in joining the American Veterans Committee, or the American Legion, or the other veterans organizations. Have you, you never thought ...

NG: No, I guess because, well, we weren't joiners and I had no connection with ... You know, I'm not a veteran, I'm not a professional veteran. You know what I mean?

KP: ... You're the first person who used that term. I've often used that term when I describe the project to my class. There are some people, who in fact, fit your, they join veterans organizations and are active ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... not that I'm degrading you, but they are ...

NG: Yes, that's their thing.

KP: Yes, where other people wouldn't be caught dead in a veteran's hall.

NG: Well, I just, well, most of the ones around us are men, I guess, and I didn't find the need for one. I didn't, it wasn't my pursuit at the moment.

KP: It sounds like you were fairly opposed to the Vietnam War when you were in the '60s. Were you initially supportive of the war?

NG: I probably didn't know much about it. I've almost forgotten the Korean War entirely, until I run into somebody who was in it, and they'd say "Oh, yes, that."

KP: Because you mentioned you were pretty tolerant of your children going to protest, in fact, almost to the point ...

NG: I think I had reached the protest stage in my life, and they could do it and I couldn't, and also there was a lot of resistance to differences in the school, like when my kids were going, long hair was, you know. I had the, not the first long haired boy in school, but I remember sitting at high school graduation and saying, "Oh, he's the only one here."

BT: The only one with long hair.

NG: ... Now he has short hair again. But [it was] partly because it seemed that nobody was certain what we were doing there, and, also, I was a little weary of "let's get the commies," because I'm just not comfortable with that. I don't know that I've ever known any Communists, but, you know, when I was in high school, [I] remember there were meetings of the, they weren't called the Young Nazis, it was the Brown Shirts something, you know, in the City. ... It was a movie even out at that time, that somehow supported the, you know, Russian idea of Communism, and, you know, people were open minded in a different way, or they hadn't learned. See, now all the people I know who are very conservative, you know, are against any of the, you know, main issues and certainly were adding Communists to the point of really thinking it was the, what do they call it, the menacing kingdom? ... Since that gave out you could see them moving to other non-causes to be against something. I think conservatives become very frightened of the world and have no way of controlling it.

BT: Yes, there's nothing really to be against now the way it was, you know. I mean, I grew up in the '50s and anti-Communism ...

KP: Communism was really ...

BT: ... was kind of the thing that united the country.

NG: Oh, the evil empire.

BT: It was the thing to be against. It is weird now, because for a lot of people, you know, I mean, I would never, but, I mean, my grandfather was especially sure the Communists were going to land any ...

NG: Oh, yes.

BT: He wired and darn near land mined his house ... and he lived in California. I don't know where he thought they were going to come from, but ...

NG: He had the Japanese out there.

BT: ... There were these people.

NG: It's just really surprising to see.

BT: Us and them and ...

NG: I remember sitting with a group of people from our church with somebody who was, I guess, he was the fundamentalist-type. He was a nice guy. ... We would tell about the sex education in school, and he was mumbling something and [I] said, "What's the matter, Ray, do you think it's a Communist conspiracy?" He said, "Yes."

BT: ... There were really a lot of people like that.

NG: Yes.

BT: ... Looking at this reminded me that you brought pictures ...

NG: Let's see what I ... I don't know what you want.

BT: I'm not going to remember to ask you.

KP: You mentioned, not that you were in any veteran's groups, but you stayed in touch with a lot of people you knew.

NG: Oh, several. We had a round-robin letter for awhile, and I stay in touch with one friend who lives and works in New York.

KP: What did various people do after they got out? Did they ...

NG: ... You don't want to read about war poems. Actually, I don't have any others that are of any significance.

BT: These were the pictures we were asking you about.

NG: The pictures I have are, see, they're in here. This is of our group in Wildwood.

BT: Oh, yes. The group on the beach.

NG: The group on the beach. I don't know whether I have the group on the beach one, but ...

BT: The group of something.

NG: This is one of those. This is a letter my father got saying, "I had served the country," or something like that. It was probably when I joined.

KP: Oh, the lieutenant, Naval Reserve.

NG: I don't know what Daddy got, a flag, or Silver Star. Now, here's our, this is just one of those crayon pictures.

KP: So did your parents display the service star in their window?

NG: I don't know. I didn't hear about it. This is, I don't have the ... beach picture here. This is the Lieutenant Commander Eberhart, the poet flying his kite. We used to get tow targets and make a harness. ... But he was the only famous one we knew. This is the whole training department with one black sailor. I've forgotten his name.

BT: Gunnery.

NG: Yes, and everybody was pretty, you know, when I say pretty close ...

BT: So there were really only twenty of you, basically, if I counted correctly, twenty women.

NG: Oh, there was ...

BT: In terms of training.

NG: ... There were WAVES in Cape May and there were probably some at Lakehurst.

BT: Yes, there were. I know there were at Lakehurst. I don't know how many.

NG: ... Some of our group came from Cape May, because Cape May sent for five telegrapher mates and they got five (specialists Ts?), which they didn't need. ... I read something about Richard Eberhart that said, you know, being in the Navy and doing other kinds of non-academic work would ruin his poetic style. Well, they were saying that real life only enhances what you have to put into your work.

BT: I would think so, but I'm not a poet, but I would think it would. I noticed some of them, not all of them, the officers are wearing the, that gray.

NG: Their greens.

BT: Is it green, or was it gray?

NG: They call them greens. It was sort of like ...

BT: Yes, it was a funny color.

NG: Yes, it was a funny color.

BT: ... I know a lot of people came back from the Pacific and saw those. Have you heard those stories about those that came back and never saw that uniform and went ...

NG: I think there's much to be, well, you know, apparently the regular Army now has issued the camouflage stuff, 'cause we have a new minister in our church who retired as a lieutenant colonel, decided he would do something else, and he said they changed the uniform just before he left, so he only bought one.

BT: Oh.

NG: Because he didn't want to spent a lot of money on those ...

BT: Yes, they are wearing camouflage now, just on bases.

NG: It's ugly.

BT: Yes, and I noticed that.

NG: It's terribly ugly.

BT: Every once in a while I go somewhere they're ...

KP: Do you know what ever happened to the black sailor you had, the gunnery instructor? Do you ever, do you know ...

NG: I didn't know him personally. I can't even remember his [name]. I can't remember everybody's name, and I was not madly in love with any of them. [laughter] There is one here who looks like Georgia, the one in ER ... I don't know what, you know, the women went off to do their thing, most of them got married, some went on to get college degrees. My friend in New York went and got a Master's degree in history and worked, well, the last place she worked was Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. She was an editor there and met a lot of interesting people. ... They either cut their staff, or moved them, so she does ... private, freelance editing in her apartment, so she just reads manuscripts all day.

KP: Oh, okay. ... In history?

NG: No. She worked with, what's *The Color Purple* lady?

KP: Oh.

NG: When she was in the ... so any of their publications ...

KP: Oh, no, that's ...

NG: I mean, she does real stuff.

KP: Oh, yes, no, I ...

NG: ... Yes, she met with Lindbergh ... and she said it was, you know, very interesting. ... She still does some, which book was she working on? It's somebody who writes very complex philosophical things. Can't remember, but she earns enough money to have a season ticket to the opera and, occasionally, travel, and that's her life. [laughter]

KP: What else do you need, if you have this?

NG: Well, yes, she has her life down to things she enjoys ...

KP: Yes, yes.

NG: ... even though it's limited, and it's probably less hectic and then some. Everybody just went off to be people like everybody else ...

KP: Did any stay in the Navy that you knew, or wanted to stay in the Navy?

NG: I had a friend at Douglass who stayed in a while, and she, it was a classmate. I remember ... her saying, at some reunion we had, that she had a daughter. She said, "She would have made a wonderful naval officer."

BT: There you could have ...

NG: But I was in no position to and who cared?

KP: The war was ...

NG: The war was over, and I just thought it was unprincipled. But, yes, I don't think, at that time, any woman saw this as a career.

KP: I guess I'm curious, 'cause we started talking in the beginning a great deal about Clark, and you remember Clark. You had mentioned on tape about a large, very interesting community and farmers ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... but also a lot of Central Europeans. You also mentioned a good chunk of the town worked at a factory. You mentioned ...

NG: The ones who weren't farmers. Well, I think there were very few businesses around, and in the olden days, there was a chair factory.

KP: Chair factory.

NG: Now there's a ladder factory.

KP: Yes.

NG: ... The people apparently worked, and I read this in something someone put out, there was the hundredth anniversary of Clark, and it was, I don't know whether it was a, I'd say it was probably a blue-collared community. But some of the people think they were upward bound and have moved in from the terrible inner cities, or something, Newark, refugees from Newark, and they move in because it's been pretty all white.

KP: Yes, no, I have friends, who I went to graduate school with, and they've referred to Clark as the "white island."

NG: Yes.

BT: Oh, interesting.

KP: Cranford and other towns have small and even somewhat significant black communities, but Clark is really ...

NG: We're supposed to have four families and four individuals, but the stories you hear, mostly from people in real estate, or people who sought homes or something, you know, you don't believe it's still going on 'cause it's illegal. I have a friend who worked for a realtor there, and she said, "Oh, yes, we hear about all this. Somebody came in and sent his wife in. His wife was white, he was black and, I don't know what." ... When our son was little, we had a neighbor who was mad about his taxes, and he said to Peter, "How would you like to have a little black boy to play with?" You see, people were still painting blacks as evil, and, of course, that was a long time ago. But a lot of people just overlook it. ... We have, you know, I've heard from two different people about, "Watch driving through Clark, especially at night, and being stopped."

BT: Being stopped.

NG: ... One was a minister in Rahway, and she said she had a friend who was a professional and that at least once a month [was] stopped in Clark. ... I have a friend who worked for Exxon, they were driving someplace, and he said, "Oh, yes, So-and-So said, 'how come you guys didn't get stopped?'" ... But the fact that it's still slightly a joke. See, I'm appalled, and you just don't know what to do. ... That's why, I think, Clark got targeted by the NAACP to see if they evened out there. ... The mayor was going to have a gathering of ministers, or clergy, to talk about it, and somebody said, "You know, you're saying we're a racist community." Well, we are. We've always been, as far as blacks are concerned. Now when we moved to our house, my mother-in-law, whose from, well, they grew up around East Orange and Glen Ridge, and she said, "Well, I wouldn't want to live in that neighborhood, 'cause there are too many Italians and they're loud." ... This was the first time I'd heard about that. There are Italian families and none of them are loud. Loud people are just about anybody. ... You can't believe it. ... They say, "Oh, it's a great community to grow up in." ... But, see, I think you change things by continue to call people's attention to it, but I guess you have to do it in the right way, or something, just keep doing it. Well, I think, Clark, I think that it's ... people of color living in the apartments, and I think somebody bought a house someplace and they burned a cross on the lawn. This was ...

KP: Yes, I heard about that. I remember my friends telling me about that.

NG: ... A friend of ours was a, he wasn't a Union County, he was in the Union, he was the chief of detectives, and he said he went over there and they weren't involved with it, the arson squad was, or something like that. ... He said they found out who did it, but the Clark police wouldn't, they didn't want to release the name because it would reflect on Clark. ... You know, I notice this young

woman lives in Clark, has always lived in Clark, and when the NAACP came, she said, "You know, people have to understand that people in Clark have never been with black people, so they don't know." ... I said, "Adrienne, how will they find out?"

BT: Exactly.

NG: ... It's so provincial, and I think it's, when you're living in a town like that, that's surrounded by, you know, mixed communities, you know, nothing is good. .

KP: I've just been curious, 'cause you've been such a native so long. Why did Clark take this direction, 'cause if you look at other towns, Cranford ...

NG: They just kept them out.

KP: ... Westfield, they have black churches, black, small black communities. They're not very large, but Clark has somehow evolved into this real ...

NG: I'm guessing it's 'cause it was always mostly blue-collar and the people who came in were, you know, there were some professionals, probably quite a lot, but some people came in because they were told by realtors that "you're safe here."

KP: Really.

NG: We have friends who [were] looking for a house and said, "This will be a good place to live, you know we don't have any ..." And whether they're still doing that, I don't know ...

BT: It's the only explanation I can think of.

NG: ... I went on one of my crusades a few years ago, and it was about the fact that the Clark police stopped so many blacks, and, you know, we used to watch. We used to go on a county road, and we'd stop and look at the color of people the cops stopped. ... I know you couldn't do anything about that, but there was a general issue, so I called some people I knew in town and around about, you know, "Where would you start dealing with this?" So the person, first person I called was a Presbyterian minister whose theologically conservative, that means he probably socially conservative, and said, well, you know, he had enough on his plate now and didn't know what to do and after all they were having, he didn't call it creeping integration, but, you know, he said, "Every year there are a few more." ... But I know his people in his church don't want any. ... Then I called a friend who I'd been in some political organization that was ... Remember the new Democratic Coalition? Well, we were trying to have a little cell in Clark, until I found out I was the only one who knew about World War II. They were all younger, so we did not share the common experience. They were all really, they were not idiots, but they, you know, one woman said, "Well, I'll be for sex education in this school, but then I'd be against it if they had it," you know, that kind of silliness. ... Anyway, I call one of these men, who was a teacher in school, and we had run for some minimal role and he was a pretty even-tempered person and, you know, responsible, and he said, "Well, you know, people in Clark probably like it that way. I don't know what to do." ... Let's

see, who's the fourth person? I called the lady minister I knew in Rahway, whose church must be partly black, and she was on some committee who I thought was supposed to be exploring these issues. ... She said, "Well, the only thing," I mean, she sympathized, understood and knew about the problem, and she said, "The only thing you can really do is gather like-minded people and talk about it." Well, that's all I do anyway. You find two like-minded people and ... So anyway, at that point, I was slightly discouraged, because otherwise you were talking to yourself. ... So we have several black members in our church, and so they both happen to be women, and so I said, you know, "What do you say?" 'cause one of them said that things hadn't gotten any better. ... She used to be like the executive secretary of New York high schools. So she was used to the big city interaction. ... She said, "Well, I just tell people my experience." You know, tell people what's been, but you can't make speeches at people. I think that's what she meant. I think Clark is that way because it never had a lot of wealth. It was mostly blue-collar for a long time. ... Then when people came in, they probably came in to find a quiet place, or because it was a new community, and they thought they were upwardly mobile, or something. It was sort of mixed.

KP: 'Cause my friends grew up, they moved from Newark, and their comments were you had a lot of police officers, a lot of firemen, who were moved out of Newark to Clark. I'm just really struck because in some ways it's just in the communities around never observed that, too. I've been to Clark, several years ago I went with them once to Clark, but I also been to Cranford quite a bit, and you just get a different ethos, or Westfield, to the point of where I know of the synagogue and the black church had occasionally dual services.

NG: Yes.

KP: So that ...

NG: ... It depends on the community, too.

KP: Yes.

NG: Now, where my son lives, they're in Edison, and they go to the one near, I don't remember what the name of the temple that he said. Their rabbi is really liberal and as a matter-of-fact, he's almost been excluded, because he'll do mixed marriages, or you know. ... See, I thought everybody did that now, that there was more, you know, about mixing, and yes, the joke abroad is, "If you don't know what to be, be married in a Unitarian Church." ... It's still a joke, but it's you know, it works for people.

BT: Yes.

NG: ... So I think Clark's sort of evolved, but it had enough of a lid on it, so it didn't grow in too many directions like Colonia. Colonia just never got quite integrated ...

-----END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE-----

KP: Are you disappointed that the farms are gone?

NG: Well, see my mother died in November, and she had about two and a half acres. ... We are now disposing of it ... because we don't want to keep it up.

KP: Yes.

NG: ... While it was never really farmed, it was, you know, it's really the last piece of open land in Clark, or almost. ... We know some of the people who ran the farms, and the one next to us, the Schwindenhammes, which became the Schwins, their kids and our kids played together and we knew them quite well. ... We used to joke to Larry who only grew leek, that was his sole crop, we always said, you know, "Leek was only twenty-five cents a piece in the store." ... So he sold, you know, made a fair piece selling his property, but he grew [old] and his son didn't want to farm. I mean, nobody wants to farm it. ... The Schwins are dying out, and the Espisito farm is still going, and he's still running it. ... I went to grammar school with these quote, "kids." The Espisitos were the first triplets in Union County, or something like that.

BT: Wow.

NG: It was their claim to fame. But, you know, the town was very provincial when we were, when I say provincial I meant ... there's a good sense, and when we joke about beautiful, colonial Westfield, it's because a lot of them are really stuffy.

KP: ... I can imagine that it would have been very stuffy, having been through Westfield and ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... I can imagine, being through towns I know. I know Cranford the best, 'cause I've actually been to the pool. Cranford seems to be more middle class, but you ...

NG: Yes.

KP: ... definitely have the upper classes in Westfield.

NG: Yes.

KP: And Clark, Clark does seem more blue-collar.

NG: Yes. But it, yes, it's mixed and it's funny when Exxon was on strike years ago. A lot of people on our street were [against] Exxon. ... My husband was management so he stayed and made a lot of money. ... The kids had a paper route and to hear the things people said to them about it, "Oh, I bet your father's making a lot of money." See, that was a certain amount of class thing there, but, you know, I guess people get along as well as anyplace. ... I never got, you know, real involved outside of my brief flurry with the New Democratic Coalition. But our oldest son said he would never live in Clark. He would never bring his children up in Clark. They live in Edison,

and they have ... many, you know, many Asian students. ... But it sort of makes a difference, you know, I mean, you don't have to fit in. You don't have to re-learn how to get along with people.

BT: Yes, that's really true. You just always kind of knew how.

NG: ... You really only know people if you, if you know them ... but I guess ... there's always somebody who's gonna be a minority, or you can make them that. I remember with my husband used to be on the Urban League in Elizabeth.

KP: Oh, yes.

NG: Years ago. ... We went to one of their dances, and I knew what it was like to be a minority then. You go in the ladies room, and you're the only white person. Then it's really a good experience to have. ... But the kids are much more open I think, or some of them.

KP: But it seems like you wanted to teach them that, too, that that was one of your goals to really ...

NG: They must have picked it up.

KP: Yes ...

BT: I've kind of ran out of questions, I guess.

KP: Is there anything we've ...

BT: We're keeping you until it's going to get dark.

KP: Yes, is there anything we've forgot to ask you about World War II, or anything?

NG: Well, you know, in thinking about my experiences, they were mostly based on a romantic view of the world and of history ... even though I had a good high school history teacher who really taught us a whole lot and, you know, reality things. ... When I was in high school, our math teacher's mother lived in Canterbury, which got bombed. But that was the only connection I ever had to that war until [later]. It was sort of distant and there was nothing you could do about it, and you thought you didn't know when it would end, so that, you know, there was a different time frame. Now somebody goes to the Gulf for six, war for six weeks, and they scream about how fast you didn't get them back, and I think, "You volunteered, dummy." ...

BT: You get back when it's over.

NG: Anyway, I thought it was, you know, I could have maybe done something better with my life. I had a good, let me put it this way ... we had a good time. We had a good time. [I] met some nice people.

BT: Positive experience.

NG: You know, and whether it did something for the war, who knows ...

KP: No, I mean, this guy in this picture looks so happy.

NG: He is.

KP: Yes.

NG: Pilots are happy.

KP: Yes.

NG: ... They're either happy, or suicidal.

KP: No, I mean, he looks, it looks like the beach party's really just enormous ...

NG: He was like that about everything.

KP: ... amounts of fun, yes.

NG: ... I don't know what happened to the beach party. ... The thing I like about it is you can't tell the officers from most of the people, and they were really nice people. I can't think of anybody here who's a shmuck. [laughter] It's not like any experience, it was, you know, you get what you can.

KP: We don't want you to forget. People have forgotten things ...

NG: 'Cause we had our fiftieth anniversary a few years ago. We had the best time just having remembrances, people's remembrance of how things were. ... One of the girls in our class was blind. Well, she still is blind. ... She told about her experiences with people, who would call her up, and it was one of the professors, who lived across the way, who said, "You know, Grace, it's eleven o'clock. You better go to bed." And so she said, "So I'd turn off the light and I'd keep on studying." Humorous things like that were a lot of fun. You were glad you had a group experience, and I think that's what may be half of what you get out of college, yes, as long as you don't play all the time. But we didn't play when we were in school. Well, if anything, I must say, we took ourselves quite seriously. Maybe all young people do. ... I remember the first talk in chapel, some student referring to us, ourselves, as the intellectuals, and I thought, "Well, I wasn't very old, so I shouldn't feel intellectual," and I just didn't think that was the point. I think if I thought I was that intellectual, I never would have gone to college. Oh, I appreciate your listening.

KP: No, we've enjoyed this.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy 5/22/01

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 5/24/01
Reviewed by Nancy Godfrey 4/03