

**WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT**  
**ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

INTERVIEWEE: Geneva Craig

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: November 18, 2010

[Begin Interview]

TS: This is Therese Strohmer, and today is November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010. I am in High Point, North Carolina. I'm with Geneva Craig, and also Kari Craig is here. And we are going to perform an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Geneva, could you say your name the way you'd like it on your collection?

GC: Geneva Spratt Craig.

TS: Okay. Well, Geneva, thank you for joining me today. Why don't we start off by you telling me when and where you were born?

GC: Okay. I was born in Dysartsville, McDowell County, North Carolina, on July the 14<sup>th</sup>, 1919.

TS: What kind of—did you have any brothers or sisters?

GC: I had—originally, there were ten in the family, eight girls and two boys. So I had seven sisters and two brothers. None are living except two sisters and myself.

TS: Right.

GC: Three of us living.

TS: And the one sister, you said, had joined the WAVES, too, right? Which sister is that?

GC: She went in—she enlisted the same time I did.

TS: What's her name?

GC: Sybil.

TS: Sybil.

GC: Yes.

TS: So you had a big family.

GC: Big family.

TS: Now, did you—was this a rural area that you grew up in? Was it rural, like in the country?

GC: It was in the country, yep, rural farm. We grew up on a farm.

TS: You grew up on a farm? What did your dad do for a living?

GC: He was a farmer.

TS: Farmer?

GC: And we all worked on the farm when we were growing up.

TS: What kind of chores did you have?

GC: I had mainly keeping—help keep the house clean, and the yard, and other sisters had different jobs. One did the ironing, one did, you know, the—doing errands, we had an old Ford Model T car. One of the sisters learned to drive, and she, you know, everybody had a job.

TS: Everybody had a—now, where did you fall in the line of sisters?

GC: I was number eight down.

TS: So you were the youngest girl?

GC: Two younger than I.

TS: There was two younger than you? Two—oh, okay. Well, how about your brothers, where did they fall in there? Were your brothers older or younger than you?

GC: One was older and one younger.

TS: Oh, you had one on each side. [extraneous comments redacted] So I imagine you stayed pretty busy on the farm. Yeah.

GC: We didn't have electricity, so we had to do some night things, like getting the corn and shucking the corn, and we had to do our homework by lamplight.

TS: Is that right? Did you—was it mostly like agriculture that you had, did you have any animals?

GC: Oh, we had cows and pigs and chickens.

TS: Milking cows, or?

GC: Yes.

TS: Did you have to do that chore? Did you have to milk any cows?

GC: [unclear]

TS: Did you do any of the milking?

GC: Oh, hand-milking.

TS: Yeah.

GC: Everything was very primitive back then.

TS: Was primitive? So, what was it like growing up then, at that time?

GC: Well, we thought it was pretty hard.

TS: Did you, at the time?

GC: But we didn't complain too much. And in later years, we appreciated looking back on the hard—you know, the hard parts. And the good times, you know, we had church activities and that kind of thing.

TS: What kind of things did you do for your church activities?

GC: Well, we had Sunday school, and we had a Christmas party every year, that sort of thing.

TS: Get-togethers. Now, did you have—where was your schooling at, school at, where'd you go to school?

GC: Oh, the school was near enough for us to walk to school. Our home was close enough to walk, through the—there's a path leading from our house to the school house, and we could walk. Didn't have bussing then, anyway.

TS: Yeah. About how far was it? How far away was it?

GC: It was about a quarter of a mile.

TS: Oh, that's pretty close, yeah.

GC: Yes.

TS: Now, did you—did you have a favorite subject or anything in school? Did you like school?

GC: I loved school.

TS: You loved it?

GC: Yes. But, unfortunately, we didn't have many books, and when I was in the first grade, the old school burned, wooden school, there wasn't anybody in it. And the family that lived near, they had a big brick house that had two stories, and they let us finish out the year in their home until they could build a new school. I had one book left from the fire, and I memorized it, so I didn't learn to read in the first grade.

TS: You had memorized it? [chuckles]

GC: But eventually they got books, you know, and I learned to read.

TS: Yeah. Now, about how many children went to school? Was it all one big classroom?

GC: No, it had like first and second, maybe three grades to a room.

TS: Okay.

GC: And then it went through the seventh grade.

TS: Went through the seventh grade. Now, did you have a favorite subject?

GC: I liked reading.

TS: You liked reading?

GC: I never cared for math too much.

TS: No? Did you have a favorite teacher?

GC: Yeah, in the seventh grade, I had my favorite teacher. My first grade teacher was a little bit—well, I was left-handed—I’ve always been left-handed, and she tried to change me for my right—to my right hand.

TS: How—what’d she do?

GC: And I got very up—very upset with her. So my mother went to her and told her not—to let me, you know, continue using my left hand. And I was okay then. But it upset me because she kept trying to change me.

TS: Did she force it, or did she just like put the pen in your other hand?

GC: She did that, she made me—she’d take the pencil and put it in my other hand, and I’d put it back.

TS: [chuckles] I had a brother who had that going on, too, when he was in school.

GC: They don’t do that now.

TS: Sometimes they—

GC: Oh, do they?

TS: Well, they did back, I guess, when he was a little boy. But yeah.

GC: Well, anyway, I got through okay.

TS: Did they have any—did you play any activities, any like sports or anything?

GC: Didn’t have sports in elementary, we had sports—had basketball, mainly, in high school, but I didn’t play basketball. My brothers did.

TS: Your brothers played high school—or, basketball?

GC: Played basketball, yes.

TS: So let’s see, you would have been—so you were in school during the Depression, right? You were—during the Depression?

GC: Oh yes, yes.

TS: You were in school. What can you tell me about that, do you remember what it was like?

GC: As I told my son Joe, we were always in a depression. [chuckles]

TS: Why do you say that?

GC: Not that—we had the necessities, we had everything we needed, but we didn't have any luxuries, so we didn't know the difference when the Depression started and when it ended.

TS: [chuckles]

GC: It just was continual.

TS: Some people say that when they were on a farm, that people came to their farm during the Depression, for food and things like that. Did you—do you remember anything like that?

GC: Somebody coming?

TS: Well, did you have any visitors that came to try to get food?

GC: No, no, no. I guess everybody was pretty self-sufficient that lived around us, because they had the same—you know, the gardens and everything. Grew our own food. We grew our own food, except for sugar and, you know, things like that.

TS: Some things that you couldn't just make, right?

GC: Yes.

TS: Yeah. Did you have—did you make your—so you made your own clothes and things like that? Your clothes?

GC: We wore hand-me-downs. Hand-me-down books, too.

TS: Yeah.

GC: Because at that time, we had to purchase our books, and my mother would tell us to ask the neighbors that were—you know, above us or below, to save their books so she could get them second-hand.

TS: That's a good idea, that's a good idea. With all those kids.

GC: She was very frugal, she wasn't—didn't waste anything.

TS: Yeah. Now, did—you went to high school, right?

GC: We had to ride a bus to high school.

TS: You did? What was that high school called?

GC: It wasn't too pleasant, because they had to leave early, it's about fourteen miles, and get home late.

TS: Yeah.

GC: The roads were muddy, we'd get stuck in the mud sometimes, coming home.

TS: Wasn't a pleasant drive.

GC: No.

TS: Did you like high school?

GC: Yeah, I liked it, I liked all my teachers. I graduated at the top of my class.

TS: Is that right?

GC: Yes.

TS: Well, that's really nice.

GC: Yup. [chuckles]

TS: Did you still like English a lot, or?

GC: Yeah.

TS: So when you were growing up, Geneva, and you're a little girl, what did you think you were going to do when you got older?

GC: I always wanted to be a teacher.

TS: You wanted to be a teacher? Did you know what you wanted to teach? Just—what kind of—was there a subject that you wanted to teach?

GC: Oh, I wanted to just teach all of—you know, in the grade school, we did all the subjects.

TS: I see.

GC: Until we got to high school.

TS: Okay.

GC: But see, five of the girls in my family were—became teachers.

TS: Five of them?

GC: Five out of eight. Another one became a newspaper journalist and one a nurse and one a stenographer—I mean, a court reporter.

TS: Court reporter?

GC: So—but five of the girls were all teachers.

TS: Well, how about that? That’s a nice number, there. How about your brothers, what’d they end up doing?

GC: Well, my oldest brother graduated at State [NC State University], back then it was State College. And he majored in forestry, so he—that’s the line of work he got into.

TS: Forestry.

GC: Forester. He was first in his state, and then he got a real big job in Florida, then he lived in Florida the rest of the time. My brother went into business in Durham with the tobacco factory, he was head of something in Durham. He was a businessman.

TS: The younger brother?

GC: Yes. But anyway, but all of us graduated from college.

TS: All ten of you? How about that.

GC: Well, the youngest brother actually—he didn’t go four years, but he went—because he had to go in the army, but the older brother graduated with honors at State, and all the rest of us—

TS: That’s quite a—that’s quite an accomplishment. For—especially in that time, especially with all those girls.

GC: Well, see, the older girls helped the younger through.

TS: Did they?

GC: And we went to work—the college where my sister that’s in the navy with me—we went to a college where every girl had to work, a work program.

TS: Right.



GC: And our room and board was a hundred, and tuition was a hundred and forty dollars a year.

TS: A year? But you weren't making a ton of money, right?

GC: So we—every girl, regardless of whether she had money or not, which most of us didn't, had to work at least ten hours a week.

TS: Wow. Now, did you—what did you do after high school? What year did you graduate high school?

GC: Thirty-seven.

TS: 1937.

GC: Thirty-seven, yes, and college, '41. I graduated from college in '41.

TS: So you went—did you go right into college after high school?

GC: Yes.

TS: What college did you go to?

GC: Asheville Normal and Teacher's College. A small liberal arts girls, all girls.

TS: How was that, did you like it?

GC: We all trained to be teachers.

TS: Yeah. Did you enjoy that?

GC: I'm sorry?

TS: Did you like college?

GC: Oh, yes.

TS: Now, was this the first time you were away from home?

GC: Yes.

TS: Yeah. You can't nod, because [laughs] the transcriber can't see that.

GC: We had to come and go on a train.

TS: Oh, you did?

GC: Yeah, we—I guess somebody met us in the little town, Marion. Marion was the capital of the county, county seat. I know—I remember coming back and forth on the train from Asheville.

TS: Now, do you remember—now at this time, in the world, what was happening—the World War was going on.

GC: We didn't know too much about it.

TS: No?

GC: No, I mean, we heard things, but you know, really didn't read or hear—of course, we didn't have TV. I guess we heard some of the faculty talking about Poland and all that, you know, the first—

TS: The invasion in '39?

GC: Yes.

TS: What did you think of President Roosevelt?

GC: Well, I admired him. I, you know, I was—I guess I voted for—I guess I was voting by that time.

TS: Yeah.

GC: I remember when he died, I was still in college when he died.

TS: Yeah. Did you—what'd you think of his wife, Eleanor?

GC: She was quite an activist, and smart, very, very intelligent. You know, I heard a lot about her through the faculty where I was going to school. And the history classes. I think my favorite course was history, and maybe English, but they kept up with things, you know. And they let us know.

TS: Let you know.

GC: We didn't have a newspaper.

TS: Do you remember when Pearl Harbor happened?

GC: When it happened? I'll never forget that. I was rooming and boarding in a little town where I was teaching, and I was the only one there, I was sitting by the radio listening,

writing a letter to my parents. And it came out on the radio, that Sunday afternoon, about the bombing. December the—

TS: Seventh.

GC: Seventh, 1941.

TS: That's right. What'd you think about it?

GC: It was real scary, and real upsetting. And I guess that was—that spring was when I thought about going into the navy, and the recruiting officer came around, you know, to teachers. And my sister was thinking the same thing, so she enlisted about the same time I did.

TS: When did you end up enlisting?

GC: Where did I what?

TS: But you enlisted a couple of years after the war started, right?

GC: I did.

TS: So you stayed working as a teacher for a little while.

GC: Was thinking about—I was thinking about it all that time.

TS: All that time. Why did you want to enlist? What was the reason?

GC: You know, the recruiter had some influence, but we got to thinking about how women could do something, whether men were being shipped out—or actually taking the place of the sailors. So they could go to—you know, out to battle. But women didn't go out of the United States.

TS: Was anybody in your family in the military before?

GC: Oh yeah, two brothers and a sister, there were four of us altogether. Both my brothers, and Sybil, my sister, and myself.

TS: How about your father, had he ever been in the military?

GC: He wasn't.

TS: Not in World War I?

GC: No, he wasn't in World War I. I think he was too old for that, he lived to be—both my parents lived to be real old.

TS: Is that right? Well, you're not doing so bad yourself. [chuckles] So how about—so you were working as a teacher, where was that at, where you were a teacher?

GC: Wake County.

TS: In Wake County. And you were teaching like elementary school?

GC: Yes.

TS: And now you and your sister—say her name again?

GC: Sybil.

TS: Sybil, you and Sybil were thinking about joining the WAVES.

GC: Yes.

TS: Why did you pick the WAVES?

GC: It's the one that was recruiting, was navy. And I don't know, my brother had not—he was in the navy, too. He was on an aircraft carrier, but I can't think whether he—he was an officer, but I can't think whether he went in before we did or after. But anyway, if he went in before, he was an influence also, if he went in before we did.

TS: Right.

GC: But I can't remember that.

TS: Did you ever think about any other service, like the WAC?

GC: No.

TS: No, nothing like that, nope, just the WAVES.

GC: Yes.

TS: Now, do you remember seeing any recruiting posters for women?

GC: Any what?

TS: The recruiting posters?

GC: Oh, yeah, I saw that at some [unclear], I guess.

TS: You think so?

GC: Yes.

TS: Any—do you remember any of them, what they said?

GC: No, I can't remember.

TS: [chuckles] If you saw one, you'd maybe recognize it, right?

GC: Yes.

TS: Yeah. So you—when you and your sister decided to sign up, why did you decide to sign up then?

GC: Well, it was just the right time. We were out of school for that year, see, that was June, so it was a good time to let the school people know that we wouldn't be back.

TS: I see.

GC: So I didn't go back there when I got out, but you know—I had two years in that nice little town. And she had—I guess several—might be a year or so more than I did, because she's older. She was in a small town up near Charlotte.

TS: I see. So you both decided—you went to Raleigh to enlist, is that right?

GC: Yes.

TS: And did you enlist on the same day? You and Sybil, did you go the same day and enlist?

GC: Yeah, we went to—yeah, the same day. She didn't come to Raleigh—no, we were separate when they did the physical and all that.

TS: Oh, I see, okay. Now, what'd your parents think about it? You enlisting in the WAVES?

GC: Well, you know, they—they were parents that wanted their children to, you know, do what they thought was the thing to do, and if it helped the country, and—they went along with all of us, in every respect. They never objected.

TS: No. They didn't have any objection—did any of your brothers have any objection to you going in?

GC: No.

TS: Any of your friends?

GC: No.

TS: Because even though a lot of women went in, it was still a small percentage that went into the military at that time.

GC: That's true. One thing, they were going to allow WAVES to go to Hawaii, and I don't think my parents wanted us to do that. They thought that was—it wasn't even a state then.

TS: That's right.

GC: I think they thought that was too far off, not for women. So—but I regret I didn't kind of go over their heads and go ahead and get that experience. But I didn't, so.

TS: So tell me about when you—when you went and signed up and then you went to basic training. Do you remember what basic training was like?

GC: I've got some pictures.

TS: Yeah.

GC: You want to wait and see the pictures—well, we had to—just like men, had to get out and do all these exercises and all—it was just sort of like the men have to go through.

TS: And you went to, you told me, Bronx, New York?

GC: Yes.

TS: Right, for that? Was that—what'd you think of New York?

GC: Well, we didn't get to see much of New York at that time.

TS: No?

GC: But, I mean, except right there in the Bronx. But I remember looking up and seeing all of the—

TS: Skyscrapers?

GC: The trains, you know.

TS: Oh, right, the trains.

GC: Some of them are above tracks, you know. I remember seeing that. But—what I was going to say now.

TS: Well, had you been to a real big city like that before? Had you been to a real big city like New York before you went there?

GC: No, no, I hadn't. But see, when I went to New York for my master's, I got to see a lot of New York. I got to see a lot of Washington, D.C. when I was—even in Arlington, because we went into Washington, it's across the bridge to Washington, and we went to a lot of plays and, you know, theatres and—

TS: That's when you—after you got all your training done, right?

GC: Yeah.

TS: Well, let's go back to basic for a minute. Was there anything that was hard for you to do, physically?

GC: No, not really.

TS: Did you like the marching?

GC: Yeah.

TS: Did you?

GC: I think some of the girls probably had a hard time. I remember seeing one fall out.

TS: [laughs]

GC: You know, some of them had a—but I guess we were pretty strong, growing up on the farm.

TS: Yeah, that's probably true. Did you have—did you have to do a lot of mental learning, at all?

GC: Not any—

TS: Like about the military, did they teach you a lot about the military?

GC: No, I don't think so. I don't remember.

TS: Like who to salute and who you're supposed to salute?

GC: We had to salute the officers.

TS: That's right. Now, so when you were done with basic training, where did you go after that?

GC: Cedar Falls, Iowa. She and I both went to the same training, that was for special training. But we both took—we tested for clerical work, [unclear] she was secretary to the commanding officer at Norfolk Base, and I was with the naval personnel. We weren't together.

TS: I see, now, you're talking about your sister, Sybil?

GC: Yes.

TS: So you went through basic training together?

GC: And then to—

TS: And then to Cedar—

GC: To Cedar Falls, Iowa.

TS: Cedar Falls.

GC: Cedar Falls. That was a teacher's college, and that's where we was [sic] housed. We got our meals there and everything.

TS: So how—what was the housing like, that you lived in?

GC: It was nice, good, and the food was outstanding because they—fresh things in Iowa, the big tall corn. They had all these fresh—they had wonderful food where we ate, in the dormitory.

TS: Is that right? Did you have a lot more freedom there than you did in the Bronx?

GC: Well, not really. I guess we—there wasn't much to that little town, I guess we didn't have anything to do, except—I don't know what we did.

TS: Did you go to any dances or anything like that? Any dances, or social activities?

GC: No, no. I don't remember any of that.

TS: Not yet. Not until maybe you got to your next base.



GC: We weren't there—let's see. I think my sister—she got sent to Norfolk before I was sent to Arlington, because she took different courses than I did. See, they—we had aptitude tests.

TS: Right.

GC: And she had some of this training prior, and I had to stay a little longer to get a little more training. I think we were there about three months. I was, three or four months, before we were sent to our base.

TS: Okay. Well, I'm going to pause this for just a second. [recording paused] Ready? Okay.

GC: Just when we [unclear]

TS: We're going to look at the scrapbook, okay.

GC: Just while we stood there, he did this.

TS: So you have a—like, a silhouette of you right here in this picture.

GC: He did two views, but I don't know—we didn't have much money, so I don't know how much—see, that was facing the other way.

TS: Okay. Now, is this you in this picture right here?

GC: Yeah. Is that the one you want to borrow?

TS: Yeah, we can take some scans of whichever ones you want us to.

GC: This is sitting somewhere, I don't remember where that was.

TS: That's all right, you're just sitting down there, okay.

GC: Now, here's some of the review and stand—that's my platoon.

TS: And this is—okay, this is in Cedar Falls, and there's a picture of you—

GC: And this is—I should have labeled them. This is where we were marching, and back there is some of the barracks.

TS: Okay, one second, I'm going to stop the track. [recording paused?] Okay. So we're looking at some of the pictures in the album, here. Okay, so this is like the parade grounds, right?

GC: Yes. And here's some of the barracks. They were just temporary. And here's the marching, and here's the ones that carried the flag, and I don't know if I was one of those or not.

TS: [chuckles] You may or may not have been. Now, I see here in this picture you got your—you almost have like a scarf, is that what that is, around your neck? Can you see that, there?

GC: Yes. I graduated at the top of my platoon.

TS: You graduated at the top of everything, it sounds like.

GC: I got a certificate, I don't know what I did with it. They called me to the headquarters and presented it.

TS: Well, that's real nice.

GC: Now, that's when—that's some of the barracks.

TS: That's where you lived in Arlington.

GC: Here's the inside. I think we had bunk beds.

TS: Okay, it looks like a dorm room, and you've got—

GC: Yeah, it was sort of like a dorm. Now, I put—I put—that's me and those two friends, and me and two of my friends. And this is when Sybil came to Williamsburg, and this is the way they used to punish, you know, the stockade.

TS: Right. Which one, is Sybil on the left or on the right?

GC: Right there.

TS: She's on the left and you're on the right? Okay.

GC: We went for a weekend to Williamsburg. I may have my little pin—I don't know if I have—that's some of my friends at the barracks.

TS: Okay.

GC: And that was—

TS: Looks like you're—

GC: That might have been—

TS: You're touring some place, there, it looks like.

GC: [unclear] Washington.

TS: Washington, D.C., maybe?

GC: No, Robert E. Lee—where is the statue?

TS: Arlington?

GC: Yeah, well, I have a picture of that somewhere.

TS: Oh, here you go, Arlington Cemetery.

GC: See, we use to walk from—to Naval Personnel, we could walk through the cemetery to the barracks if it was weather. And it was beautiful in the fall, real—and I don't—that's visiting some place in Washington, and that's me.

TS: Same—that's you, too? Okay. And then just—oh, Mount Vernon, okay.

GC: Now, that's the same two friends, I don't—

TS: Is this you right here? Okay, you were on the far left.

GC: She was from Kansas, and she was from North—South Dakota, North Dakota.

TS: Okay.

GC: This girl was from Boston.

TS: Is this you on the left here, with the girl from Boston?

GC: Yes.

TS: Okay.

GC: Now, Robert E. Lee—the monument, the big thing, is that it, what that is?

TS: The one up—well, it's his property in Arlington, right? Yeah, this is that same picture. I'm pretty sure that's right up there in Arlington, up at the top. Yeah.

GC: This is—

TS: So you're just standing on the stairs, there?

GC: It's the—can't think—Robert E. Lee big building, I don't know.

TS: Right, I should know it, and I'm sorry I can't think of it.

GC: Is that where the unknown soldier—

TS: Right, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is in Arlington, up near the top, kind of right in front of this.

GC: Right. Anyway, we went to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, visited—well, that's a picture of me and—

TS: Is this you relaxing somewhere?

GC: Yes. That's—now that's Sybil, right there.

TS: Okay.

GC: We were visiting—my brother married, after he got out of service, he married a girl that lived there, they invited us for a weekend.

TS: Oh, nice, in Williamsburg?

GC: Now, here's Sybil and me. Now, she's right here, and I think I'm a little bit taller than she is.

TS: [chuckles] Oh, that's a nice picture. Is that you, here?

GC: Yeah, I don't—yeah, I don't have—just my uniform, don't have my cap on.

TS: That's a nice picture.

GC: I have another—

TS: Couple of those. There's a duplicate. That's another one.

GC: There it is, see all those steps?

TS: Now here, what's going—oh, this is VE [Victory in Europe] Day. Well, how about that. Is that you and your sister?

GC: No, I don't—I don't know where, we were there somewhere.

TS: Are you in this picture?

GC: I think—

TS: That's you right here, maybe?

GC: Maybe, I can't remember. I think we were allowed to go, I mean, we were there when it happened.

TS: Looks like people were throwing papers around and things. Looks like—how about that. That's a neat picture.

GC: VE Day was in June, wasn't it?

TS: Yeah. What do you remember about that day?

GC: Now, there's the pictures of when I was at Columbia. Not that one, there's the little town I taught in. This was at Columbia.

TS: Okay.

GC: A girl—I thought I had a picture of the little boy I tutored at Columbia, a little Austrian refugee boy.

TS: Is that him right here in the middle?

GC: Yeah, that's him.

TS: Right in the middle.

GC: And that's his sister.

TS: Right, you said you tutored—so this is you and the boy and the little girl that you tutored.

GC: That's his sister. And I was chosen to help him with English, I don't know how long I did it. But this famous educator had adopted these two children.

TS: Oh.

GC: And after I got through tutoring him, he and his wife had me come to their fine apartment for tea.

TS: Oh, that's nice. And so—

GC: Anyway, that was a nice experience, because he was a real sweet little boy, and I guess they furnished the books.

TS: Right.

GC: His adoptive father was a famous educator, back in the old days.

TS: So now, are more of these of the military, or are you getting into your—

GC: That's Columbia. And that's my sister.

TS: Your sister there. So most of the military pictures are done?

GC: They're up front. This is family, mainly.

TS: Well, I'm going to stop it, but I'm still [recording paused] Okay, so we just got done looking through the album, that was real nice, we got some nice pictures. Now, when you finished at Cedar Falls, with your training, where did you get sent to?

GC: Arlington, Virginia.

TS: And you were working in what job?

GC: Naval personnel. It was a big building where all the records were kept of everybody that was in the navy.

TS: Tell me about a typical day at work.

GC: [pause] Let me think. Searching for different records—people's records that were in the service, or other services, and combining them. For—I don't know what we did with them, I guess something with archives or something.

TS: You mean, when people switched from one service to another, or just—you were just collecting them? Did you just put the records together, was that what you did?

GC: We were trying to get everything—yeah, of prior service, and update all the—with the navy service.

TS: Okay.

GC: Some of them had had prior service in National Guard and that kind of thing. So we had to do a lot of looking in files.

TS: You didn't have a computer then, to—

GC: No.

TS: You had a lot of files.

GC: We didn't even have up-to-date fingerprint things, but we had a section—fingerprint—people—men, I think the men got to stay for that.

TS: Yeah.

GC: Fingerprint.

TS: Did you like your job?

GC: Yeah, I did.

TS: What did you like about it?

GC: Well, I just liked being with, you know, with people, and accomplishing these things that they needed elsewhere. I don't know who requested all these things, I don't remember that. I don't remember.

TS: Now, what were you thinking about the war at this time? So let's see, you went—so it would have been like '43 or '44—

GC: What did I think about what?

TS: The war.

GC: Well, we was—like I said before, you know, we didn't keep up with it too much. We just went about doing our duty, and we didn't have—I don't think we had even radio where I lived, and I guess we had newspapers, kept up with it somewhat there, and different people that we worked with kind of—but we didn't—I don't know, we just took it in stride, sort of, and didn't—but we knew the war was going on, you know, and we knew when it was ended and all the celebration and everything.

TS: Well, now, both of your brothers were in the military, right, by this time?

GC: What?

TS: Your brothers, your two brothers?

GC: What about my brothers?

TS: They were in the service, they were in the war? One, you said, was an officer—the older brother was an officer?

GC: One was a commander on an aircraft carrier. And he—he didn't fly, he was a supply officer. And then the other brother was in the Pacific—South Pacific, he was in the army.

TS: Did you worry about them at all?

GC: No, not really.

TS: No?

GC: No. I guess we did, but we didn't have time to—

TS: Too busy to worry?

GC: Didn't have time to think about it too much.

TS: Did you get a chance to see them at all?

GC: Not 'til they—well, I think my oldest brother got leave and came to see my parents. He was not married yet—yeah, he was married to—I guess they came to see my parents before he went back to the ship.

TS: Now, what kind of things did you do like on your off time? Did you finally get some time to do something socially?

GC: We went bicycling.

TS: Where'd you go bicycling?

GC: Around the Jefferson Memorial. A whole bunch of us, we rented the bikes and rode all around during cherry blossom time. Bicycle—I should have—well, you know, back then, Therese, we didn't have cameras much. Not like it is now.

TS: Everybody's taking a picture every five minutes now, right?

GC: So anyway, we went and did that, and they had—different buses would come to take us to army bases to take us to dances. And I don't think we had places for them to come to, just barracks, but they'd come and take the ones that wanted to go to the army bases around Virginia, and just things like the dances and whatever.

TS: Now, did you wear your uniform all the time, even off-duty? Your uniform?

GC: Did I what?

TS: Did you wear it off-duty?

GC: No, we couldn't—we weren't allowed to go anywhere without—

TS: Wearing your uniform?



GC: That's right.

TS: So you didn't—you couldn't wear civilian clothes.

GC: No, no.

TS: You always wore your uniform? What'd you think of your uniform? Did you like it?

GC: Yeah, I liked it. Yes, I liked it. I didn't keep—well, I've got one thing in there, I think, the ring we wore over our hats, called a havelock.

TS: Havelock?

GC: Yes, it was for—to protect our hat—cap from getting wet. I don't think I kept my other—I don't think I have anything in there, might have a jacket. I don't know if I kept anything else. I know I gave the jacket—the winter jacket away. I could use it now.

TS: Yeah. [laughs]

GC: It was called a peacoat.

TS: A peacoat, right. Those are real nice. The wool—they were wool, right?

GC: I don't know what I gave it to.

TS: Now, what kind of—when you went to dances, what kind of music were you listening to?

GC: Music like the '50s and, you know—

TS: Do you remember any of the bands or anything?

GC: Yeah, the big bands, yes.

TS: Do you remember any of the big bands that you listened to?

GC: No, I don't remember hearing any of the big bands.

TS: Did you like going to the dances?

GC: Yeah, I liked that. They had—we had a nice dance in the graduate hall when I was in New York, a tea dance in the afternoon. That was nice. I had somebody to invite, you know.

TS: Well, we had—when we talked a little earlier, you had said you met your husband after the service.

GC: The what?

TS: You met your husband after the service.

GC: Oh yeah, after I came back to High Point.

TS: But were you dating during the service?

GC: No, I hadn't met him before.

TS: Did you date anybody else?

GC: Oh, yeah, at Columbia, I had a nice friend. But he was from the state of Washington.

TS: Yeah.

GC: We did a lot of things together, but it was nice. Well, you know, we were just friends. I didn't know a thing about his family, but I know he wasn't married.

TS: Now, you had said you remembered when President Roosevelt died.

GC: Did what?

TS: When President Roosevelt died?

GC: Yes.

TS: Can you tell me about that?

GC: Well, I know it was a sad time. And I guess we saw pictures of—not of him dead, but I guess we saw pictures of Warm Springs, where he died, you know.

TS: Were you worried about the country at all, when he died?

GC: No.

TS: No? Did you know anything about President Truman?

GC: I knew he was—sort of a plain, you know, good man, and trusted him. You know, he was—he was just himself, you know, he was real down to earth. I remember everybody being pleased that he could take over, even though they were sad about Roosevelt.

TS: Yeah.

GC: So.

TS: So you're just going about, doing your job, you're busy, you're busy with your job, right?

GC: Yeah, that's right. That's true.

TS: How long did you expect to stay in the military? How long did you expect to stay in the WAVES?

GC: Well, I could have signed up for permanent, but I wanted to get back to teaching.

TS: Yeah.

GC: So three years was about—I was eligible—they went by points, to let you out. And my sister, she got out before I did for some reason, was older, I can't remember the reason. But they had points that allowed you to, you know.

TS: To get out. Well, did—you had—when you were in, still, you were talking—you showed me a picture of you in Washington, D.C. at the Vict—when we won in Europe, right. The VE Day.

GC: Yes.

TS: Do you remember that day and how everybody felt?

GC: I do, everybody was really keyed up and happy, yeah, I remember that.

TS: And you went down to Washington, D.C., and what was that like? Can you describe what that looked like?

GC: Real upbeat and excited and, you know, everybody was hugging everybody. Big celebration.

TS: Everybody was out in the streets?

GC: Yeah.

TS: Like that, yeah. Now, when President Truman decided to do the two bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, what'd you think about that, to end the war?

GC: When he dropped the bomb?

TS: Yes.

GC: Well, I had mixed feelings about it.

TS: Did you?

GC: Mixed feelings, yeah. I guess it had to be something—they had to do something, but I don't know about all those lives that—you know, it was sad. But what else could they do, you know, to stop Japan? So, I guess he—I guess that was a hard decision. Yeah, I remember a lot about that.

TS: Well, you had—you said one of your brothers was in the Pacific, right?

GC: Yeah.

TS: And in the army.

GC: Yeah, he was in the army.

TS: So was he doing the island fighting?

GC: He was in quite a bit of action, but he wasn't wounded or anything. He wasn't.

TS: Yes. So he—if they hadn't have dropped the bombs, he might have had to go and invade—

GC: Yeah, that's true, that's true.

TS: —Japan. Did that ever—you ever think about that?

GC: That's true.

TS: What'd your brother think about them dropping the bomb, did he ever say?

GC: I don't know if they ever—I don't know if they expressed feelings about it or not.

TS: Yeah.

GC: I don't know.

TS: Well, did you—how were you promoted, did you—

GC: I had to take a test. Test.

TS: How'd you do on that? [unrelated comments redacted] So what was your rank that you got to be in the—

GC: When I got out? Chief petty officer. I think I told you, did you hear?

TS: Yeah, you told me, but we weren't on tape yet.

GC: I was a chief yeoman. Yeoman was—had to do with clerical work, you know, office work.

TS: Now, did you have any—was there anybody that, when you worked with people, sometimes they work really good and sometimes they don't work out, did you ever have anybody like that, that worked for you?

GC: No.

TS: They all did a good job?

GC: No, I was fortunate to work with real nice people, nice navy people. See, we were all—in that building, nearly everybody was navy, except one or two civilians, now. One woman in my building was a civilian, but she had been working a long time at that—

TS: In that job, for the military?

GC: Yeah.

TS: So she—now, how did people treat you when you went around in your uniform?

GC: They were nice, very nice.

TS: Yeah. And you said you got to go to plays in Washington, D.C.?

GC: Yeah, I went to a lot of things in Washington. Museums—we had to buy our shoes and uniform, we got—we got pay for them, I mean, you know, we got—we didn't have to spend our money. I saved my money and bought me a first car when I got out of the navy.

TS: What kind of car did you get?

GC: First, I had to learn to drive.

TS: Oh. [laughs]

GC: I got a Chevrolet Powerglide, first one they had out was the Powerglide.

TS: Is that right.

GC: Fifteen hundred dollars for it.

TS: That was a lot of money then. Yeah.

GC: That's the first car I ever had.

TS: What color was it?

GC: I think it was kind of a greyish blue.

TS: Yeah.

GC: Or green—I can't remember. But I kept it a long time.

TS: I was going to say, how long did you keep that car?

GC: Kept it a long time.

TS: I bet. Well, tell me what you thought about—when you did finally get out, when your points were to the point where you could get out, what were you thinking about doing then?

GC: Well, I knew I was coming—going—coming to—I didn't come to High Point. Yes, I did, too, but they were out begging for teachers.

TS: They were?

GC: And I had given away all of my civilian clothes, and I took all the insignia off my navy things and applied for the job in my uniform.

TS: Is that right? [chuckles]

GC: Except there wasn't anything to indicate navy, though, because I didn't wear a hat. But I remember taking all that off and going to the superintendent for a job. And I don't know yet why I gave away all my clothes, all my jackets and—didn't wear pantsuits back then. All my skirts and—so then I had to start in and buy—save my money and buy some clothes.

TS: [chuckles]

GC: I'll never forget, my sister, the older, had a car by then, on the farm, and she took me to Spartanburg, South Carolina, and I bought a whole outfit, even a hat, and that's what I wore to the first teacher's meeting in High Point, was that new outfit that I bought with my own money.

TS: Now, you had said earlier that you did use your GI Bill. What'd you use that for, your GI Bill? When you went to get your—for your education?

GC: Oh, I had to take all these courses, you know, to get my MA.

TS: And where did you go for that?

GC: Columbia.

TS: Columbia.

GC: Teacher's College, the teacher's part—see, it's divided up into different, you know—

TS: Departments.

GC: Law and—yeah. We went to the Teacher's College—somewhere, I've got the picture with my chief petty officer outfit on, but I don't know where it is, either. I'll have to do some looking, Therese.

TS: Okay.

GC: I know I've got those little insignia and all that stuff, I know I've got that—you could borrow it if you wanted to.

TS: Well, tell me why you—why you decided to go get your master's?

GC: To take advantage of being able to get it, you know, not cost me anything.

TS: So having the GI Bill was beneficial?

GC: Oh yeah, a lot of people—a lot of people used that.

TS: Yeah.

GC: And I went on a train to New York with my trunk packed, didn't know a single person. But luckily, I had kept up with the dean of women at Asheville Normal, and she was teaching over at Rutgers, and she—I guess I let her know I was going to be in New York. She came to my room and visited me.

TS: Well, that was real nice of her. So you weren't all alone.

GC: So, Dr. Triggs was her name.

TS: Dr. Triggs?

GC: So then, I was able to make friends, though, you know, I didn't have any trouble making friends.

TS: [unclear] Go ahead

GC: And then after I got my master's, I had a chance to go to New Hampshire for a six week science course, working with school children. Science. So I did that before I got back to the farm.

TS: [chuckles] There you go.

GC: That was all summer. See, I got my master's in June, and I signed up for this, several other girls signed up—I don't have any pictures of that—went to this little place in New Hampshire, and from—oh, got a lot of trips, went to Mount Washington, and went out in the field to catch butterflies and do all that kind of—

TS: So you do like school, don't you?

GC: To me, that was one of the highlights after my master's, going and—with—we were housed in a nice place, too. Nice—I think it was a dormitory. It was a teacher's college, too, but the school children stayed in session so they could do all these things with the ones that were—so I had extra credit toward a doctorate. I got credit for that—

TS: Oh, so you were working on—

GC: —But I never did pursue like you're doing. I never did pursue going on.

TS: Why not? Did you want to?

GC: Well, you know, I just felt like I needed to get back with the children, and.

TS: Now, when did you meet your husband?

GC: That year, after I came back, at that boarding house.

TS: Yeah. So you went all the way through the war and all the way through your master's and—

GC: And back home.

TS: And then you met your husband there. That's nice. Well, would you consider—Geneva, do you consider yourself an independent person?

GC: Yes.

TS: Do you think you were independent before you went into the WAVES?

GC: Well, I would say I became more independent when I went to college.

TS: When you went—for the first time?

GC: Everybody had a job and, you know, we had to do our job or we didn't get that much money off of our tuition. [chuckling] Everybody had to—do everything except work in



the yard. We had one man that did the yardwork. Everything else, the girls did. Laundry, kitchen, office. I did the switchboard in the office. All these jobs, you know, cleaning the—I mean, hard work. Waiting on the tables in the dormi—in the dining room. You had to keep track of your hours.

TS: So by the time you got to the military, that was no more difficult than the things you had to do in college?

GC: [unclear]

TS: By the time you went into the WAVES, it wasn't—

GC: I was independent by then.

TS: So when you worked in the WAVES, in personnel, that wasn't any harder or—

GC: No.

TS: And what about following all the military rules, was that difficult?

GC: No.

TS: No?

GC: Didn't affect me.

TS: Now, did you see yourself as a pioneer by going into the military?

GC: Yeah, I consider myself a pioneer.

TS: Did you?

GC: Yeah.

TS: I think you are. What—if you look at the kind of things that women can do today in the military, compared to what you did, what do you think about that?

GC: Oh, it's altogether different. Can even go on the submarines.

TS: Yeah, now they're going to be able to, right. What do you think about that, the different roles women can—

GC: Well, I think it's wonderful. You know, if women can do the job.

TS: Because some people say that maybe women—there's some jobs that women shouldn't be able to do in the military, now. What do you think about that?

GC: Anyhow.

TS: Is there anything that you think that they shouldn't be able to do?

GC: Any what?

TS: Any job that women shouldn't be able to do?

GC: No, I don't think—I can't think of anything. If they're capable of doing it, you know, I don't think [unclear].

TS: Do you think that your life has been any different because you joined the WAVES?

GC: Oh. Well, yeah, it could have been different, yes.

TS: How would it have been different?

GC: Well, I wouldn't have noticed much about other cultures, see, at Columbia, we had students from all over, everywhere. I wouldn't have—I wouldn't have appreciated the others' contributions as much had I not gone—been with them, or had classes with them. You know.

TS: And do you think that that—because you had the GI Bill and were able to go to Columbia, is that why you think that that's true?

GC: Yes.

TS: What about the people that you worked with when you were in Arlington? Did you work with different kind of cultures?

GC: Yeah, they were mainly from different states. I don't think they had any foreigners, but mainly I had a lot of coworkers from different states, in the United States.

TS: All over the United States.

GC: Yes.

TS: So that was a good experience, too, you think?

GC: Yeah.

TS: Yeah. And did you—well, is there anything that we haven't talked about with your military service that you'd like to add?

GC: I can't think of anything. A funny little joke.

TS: Oh, let's hear the joke.

GC: Well, see, in the navy, you know, gossip and rumor was called scuttlebutt. Did you ever hear that?

TS: Yes.

GC: Anyway, I wrote—we didn't have a phone, of course, so I would write to my family, and one of the sisters would write back.  
And I said "There's a lot of scuttlebutt going around," I don't know whether I explained it.  
She wrote back, she said she hoped I didn't catch it.

TS: [laughs] That you didn't catch the scuttlebutt.

GC: She thought it was some kind of disease, [chuckles]

TS: Well, is there any part about the military that was your favorite, that you liked to do?

GC: Well, I liked when I got promotions!

TS: [chuckles] You liked that?

GC: That was more pay.

TS: Yeah. Did you ever have any trouble with any of the men not accepting women in the military?

GC: No, not really.

TS: No? Everybody was really accommodating?

GC: Yeah. Everybody was very cooperative and cordial, yeah.

TS: So do you think you'd do it again?

GC: Yeah, if I were young, I'd do it again.

TS: Yeah. Have any—do you have anybody that you know who's gone into the military in your family after you? Any grandchildren?

GC: I don't think so. Well, yeah, Kari's got a son, he's in the military. He's twenty-one years old.

TS: What service is he in?

GC: He's in the army.

TS: He's in the army?

GC: And he's stationed—he was stationed in South Korea, but he's in Louisiana now. So yeah, I forgot about Ryan. Ryan's made a good soldier.

TS: So there's a nice—tradition is continuing, then.

GC: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

GC: But none in my side of the family. And my—they really wanted my older brother to stay in the navy [did?].

TS: Is that right?

GC: He was going to get another promotion, they said, but see, he wanted to—he wanted to get back to his field. Forestry was what he was interested in.

TS: That's right, that's right.

GC: So he didn't.

TS: But you said that you might have stayed in, too, if you hadn't wanted to get back to teaching, right?

GC: Yeah, that's right. That's true.

TS: So you enjoyed it. Yeah. Well, I have really enjoyed talking to you today. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

GC: Well, I can't think of anything. Just—you know, a nice part of my life to look back on. And I had signed up for a Freedom Flight, and I had been accepted, but I got this back problem and I was having so much pain I had to change it. But the man in charge said they'd put me on the list for spring.

TS: What's the Freedom Flight?

GC: Oh, the Freedom Flight is taking veterans to Washington, flying them up there for a day and—leave early in the morning and come back about eight that night, and they take you to all the places and do all these wonderful things. Some of the—one woman who was in the marines, here, lives here, and several of the men have been.

TS: So you got on that, but you had the problem with your back, so maybe you'll get to go—

GC: Yeah, it kept me from going, because I was having a hard time. So I had to cancel, but they don't—they resume again in the spring. They don't do them in the wintertime. So they put you in a wheelchair, just take you everywhere. One caregiver is assigned to three different people, to look after you. So you get all this attention, they get you lunch, they give you a throwaway camera, and all these things. So I'm hoping I can go—

TS: Can go in the spring? Well, that'll be nice.

GC: I was disappointed.

TS: Have you been back to that area since you worked there?

GC: Only on a bus, a church group I was in at one time. They—we went to Washington, but we didn't—I don't think we got out to the museum, but I had been to all of them. I'd been to the Smithsonian and, you know.

TS: Yeah.

GC: But, you know, things basically are pretty [much] the same, except they've torn down those temporary buildings.

TS: That you lived in?

GC: Yeah. They were all—even the building I was in and worked in has been—all that's been torn down. The living quarters, they were temporary. So anyway.

TS: That's changed a little.

GC: I hope to go on the next one. They have one—the Rotary Club pays for all this.

TS: Well, that's a real nice service.

GC: So it's a nice—it's a nice treat for veterans.

TS: It sure is. Well, I hope you get to go on it in the spring.

GC: I hope so. Then they've had several things here, honoring veterans. Luncheons and—

TS: Yeah. You make sure you get your picture up? Yeah? Good. Well, Geneva, thank you very much for talking with me today.

GC: Thank you for doing—you've been a very nice interviewer.

TS: Well, I've enjoyed it.

GC: Well, do you want this Miss Hayworth's[?] name?

TS: Yeah, I think we'll get that. I'm going to turn the tape off and then I'll get that information from you, okay? Be just a second.

[End of Interview]