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## **The U. S. Naval Reserve Midshipmen School, Northampton, 1942 to 1945: A Personal Account**

**Margaret Clifford Dwyer**

Long before Congress enacted legislation establishing the WAVES, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, the City of Northampton and Smith College were making plans for the arrival of the women chosen to be part of a new branch of the United States Naval Reserve.

In the Spring of 1942, Mrs. Mary Bailey, who headed all committees involving women's activities in civilian defense in Northampton, attended a meeting of Northampton's Women's Civilian Defense, in a classroom in the old high school building which is now known as Sullivan Square. Mrs. Bailey announced that Emma B. Proctor, assistant treasurer of Smith College, would not be at the meeting that day, because she was making arrangements for the United States Navy to come to Northampton. At that time, I was a mathematics teacher and my classroom was centrally located. It was an ideal place to have late afternoon meetings. After school closed in mid-June, many meetings were held at "The Beeches," the former home of President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, which was owned at the time by Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Bailey.

The Navy was coming to Northampton! The news was a bombshell, but those who were present on that day wondered how the Navy would get to Northampton, what it would do once it arrived, and how long it would stay.

Northampton has two "large" bodies of water — Paradise Pond on the Smith College campus and a stretch of the Connecticut River that runs by Northampton, separating it from Hadley, its neighbor to the east. The problem that really concerned everyone on that day was the question of the Navy, which to most of us meant ships, sailing on the Connecticut River, which had a dam at Holyoke, ten miles down river from

Northampton, and another at Turners Falls, twenty miles upstream. How could ships get to Northampton?

In July of 1942, the perplexing questions about sailing Naval vessels in or around Northampton were answered. Emma Proctor was one of many at Smith College who were arranging for classrooms and for housing accommodations for the yet unknown new arm of the naval reserve.

There had been some informal inquiries by the Navy in September of 1941, concerning the possibility of training women at several women's colleges in the east.<sup>1</sup> According to "Dates from the Diary of the Smith College Alumnae Secretary," Smith College was first approached by the United States Navy on June 8, 1942.<sup>2</sup>

On June 30, 1942, Smith College President Herbert Davis and members of his staff met with naval officers from the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, and from the First Naval District in Boston.<sup>3</sup> Following their conference and lunch, they met with Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Wiggins. Arrangements were being made with the college for housing, classroom space, and administrative offices. The meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Wiggins concerned feeding the Navy.

On July 30, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the bill authorizing the establishment of the women's reserve of the United States Naval Reserve, almost two months after the Northampton women in civilian defense had heard about the Navy coming to Northampton.<sup>4</sup> Just four days later, on August 3, 1942, Mildred H. McAfee, president of Wellesley College, was sworn in as Lieutenant Commander of the United States Naval Reserve, and she was assigned to head the WAVES

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1. Letter from Rear Admiral Leigh Noyes, U.S.N., Director of Naval Communications, dated September 25, 1941, to Dr. Ada Louise Comstock, President of Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts. The presidents of the leading women's colleges in the northeast were planning to meet in October, and Admiral Noyes was particularly interested in the possibility of extracurricular training of some women seniors for naval crypto-analytic work. This letter was found in the Smith College Archives, in a folder marked U.S. Navy Dept., 1941-44. The folder was in a box which was labelled "President Davis."

2. "Dates from the Diary of the Smith College Alumnae Secretary kept during the WAVES occupation of the Alumnae House 1942-1945," page 1, found in Box 180, Smith College Archives.

3. President Davis Box, Smith College Archives.

4. Daily Hampshire Gazette (Northampton, Mass.), July 31, 1942, p. 1.

program.<sup>5</sup> Several other outstanding women were immediately given commissions, and were assigned to duty in Washington, D.C.

On that same day, President Davis was notified that the naval training school would begin at Smith College on August 28.<sup>6</sup> Originally, the Navy had selected Cornell University to train the probationary women officers, but it took so long for President Roosevelt to sign the bill that Cornell withdrew from the program.

In rapid succession the officers began reporting to Northampton prior to the arrival of the first group of probationary women officers.<sup>7</sup> Among them were Captain Herbert W. Underwood, the commanding officer, and Lieutenant Commander Philip R. Baker, the executive officer, who came on August 13, 1942. Lieutenant Elizabeth Crandall, the ranking woman officer, reported for duty on August 24, 1942.

In less than a month, an advance group of probationary women officers from all sections of the United States reported for duty in Northampton.<sup>8</sup> Naval administrative offices were located on the second floor of the Alumnae House at Smith College. The first group of officers was billeted at Capen House, on Prospect Street. Capen, a Smith College dormitory, was rapidly transformed to accommodate the 120 women who were in that first contingent of WAVES. Single and double dormitory rooms were expanded almost miraculously by the use of double bunk beds, usually two to a room.

Who were these women who put their careers on hold for the duration, while they served their country in the United States Navy?<sup>9</sup> By far the greatest number were educators, ranging from elementary school teachers to college professors. In addition, there were six deans or assistant deans from some of the best-known colleges in the country. The media representatives included newspaper correspondents and radio personalities. They were

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5. Anniversary Program S.S. Capen WAVES, Washington, D.C. August 28, 1943, "March of Time," p. 1.

6. "Dates from the Diary of the Smith College Alumnae Secretary," August 3, 1942, p. 1.

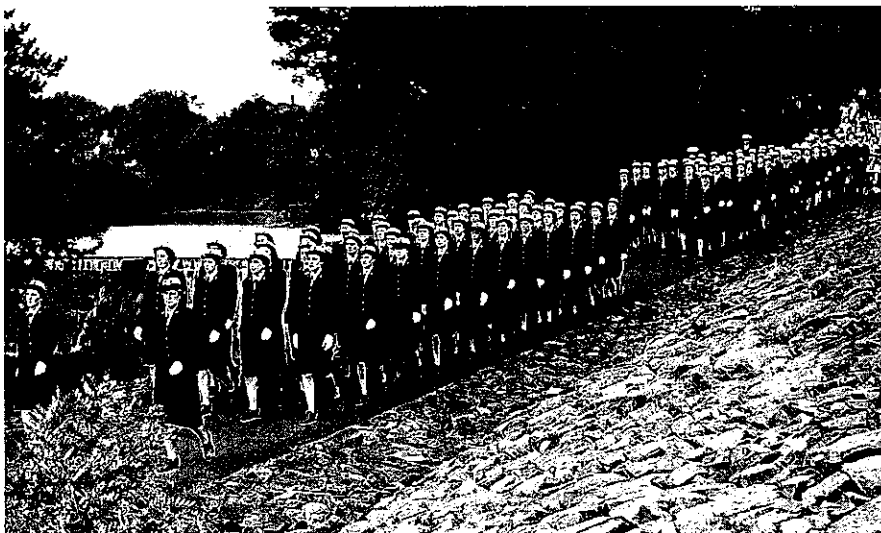
7. *Ibid.*, August 13, 1942, p. 1.

8. *Ibid.*, August 27 and 28, 1942, p. 1.

9. Anniversary Program, S.S. Capen WAVES, Washington, D.C., August 28, 1943, "Guess Who", pp. 4-11.

administrators, librarians, merchandisers, home economists, women from the medical field, women from government departments, personnel officers, social workers, a landscape architect, and a sculptor. I was proud to be part of this impressive group of successful business and professional women.

When the first contingent of midshipmen arrived in October, three companies were housed at Capen, Northrop, and Gillett Houses, on the Smith College campus, and another three companies were billeted at the Hotel Northampton. By then, the entire hotel had been taken over by the Navy, including Wiggins Tavern, the ballroom, and other public rooms. It was announced in September that 300 midshipmen would be housed and trained on the Mount Holyoke College campus in South Hadley, because Smith College had no more available space.<sup>10</sup>



First public appearance of WAVE officers in uniform, marching to the Smith College Athletic Field. From Dorothy C. Bailey Album.

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10. "Dates from the Diary of the Smith College Alumnae Secretary . . .," September 4, 1942, p. 1.

From the first day of their arrival, the new residents of Northampton marched in formation everywhere they went,<sup>11</sup> — to class, to the Smith College athletic field, and to meals, regardless of the weather. With raincoats, and with havelocks to cover their hats, they were ready for any weather. They were an impressive sight in Northampton, particularly when they were marching to their meals three times a day.

The line of march from Capen House to the hotel was via Prospect Street, across State Street to Park Street (which is now Trumbull Road), down Gothic Street to Court Street, to the south entrance of the hotel. The midshipmen who were billeted at the twin dormitories, Northrop and Gillett, on Elm Street, "fell in" formation in back of those dormitories, marched to Prospect Street, and then followed the route described above.

Early on, the residents of Northampton learned the times and the routes taken by the WAVES, and they adjusted their own schedules, so they could park their cars along the line of march and watch the Naval personnel go marching by. Gothic Street was their favorite street for viewing, and either before or after the evening meal was the favorite time to watch.

The first group of women was really on an "open enrollment" plan, with new people arriving every day. While the school opened on August 28, my orders did not come through until September 9. I was selling War Bonds in front of the Academy of Music when I received my orders. September 10 was a day to remember, the day I reported for duty with the Navy. I knew very little about the Navy, but I learned in a hurry, in fact that very first day was a test that no one else in the group had to face. Being tall, I found myself at the front of the marching platoon, on the way to the hotel. There, on Gothic Street, was the crowd of onlookers. I was easy to identify, and word spread fast that someone from Northampton was in the group. Many of those who were watching called out my name as we marched past, and those who did not know me quickly learned it. I was such a neophyte in the military that I was scared to death that I would do something unmilitary that would cause problems. Therefore, I did not even smile when I heard the sightseers call out my name. However, to acknowledge the greeting I did wink, without turning my head to one side or the other. Often, the bystanders would

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11. Daily Hampshire Gazette, August 28, 1943; New York Herald Tribune, August 29, 1942.

return the wink, to the amazement of my companions. Back at Capen House, several of the WAVE officers remarked that there were many "flirts" in Northampton!

Walking along Main Street during free time was an experience for the residents, for my WAVE friends, and particularly for me. I was familiar with the stores, the merchants, and the available services, so I was frequently asked to accompany two or three of the women on a shopping tour. Every time, I would be stopped by several people, who "claimed" me, and who wanted to touch my uniform, often to determine the quality, for good fabric was scarce during wartime. Since everyone had heard that the WAVE uniform had been designed by the famous Mainbocher, the style-conscious women wanted a closer look.

The WAVES made an immediate and lasting impression on Northampton. And I was the lucky recipient of much of the admiration expressed by the residents of the town. In the early 1940s, the social life of a single woman teacher in Northampton was very limited. Eyebrows would be raised if she appeared at a cocktail party! And if she had the temerity to hold a cocktail glass in her hand, regardless of whether she was actually drinking from it, she was inviting criticism, for conduct unbecoming a teacher.



The author of this article, Margaret Clifford, 1942

Suddenly my social life was expanding. I became a social asset to the hostesses of Northampton, for everyone knew me, and I was their contact with the new and exciting naval presence in town. All of this attention placed an enormous burden on me, as I had to be successful in this new military endeavor. At the time, I was the only person from Northampton among the WAVES in

town, and I became the center of attention. It was flattering to receive so many invitations to dinners, teas, and other social events. It was also exciting to be asked to speak about the WAVES to clubs and organizations in the area. Many of the requests were directed to the commanding officer, who then ordered me to appear, and to speak. I had an advantage, for the people knew me and they felt free to ask questions, not only about the training, but also about the Navy blue uniform. Before a program was over, there always was at least one person who asked for the opportunity to try on the WAVE hat. That also was part of every social event that occurred in a private home. Every woman present wanted to know how she would look if she had joined the Navy!

After a hectic period of orientation, which included being fitted for uniforms, attending classes, marching, learning naval regulations, and receiving assignments, the first class of probationary officers was commissioned on September 30, 1942. With their Navy blue uniforms and their reserve blue stripes of ensign, lieutenant junior grade, or lieutenant, they took their orders and left for various assignments throughout the United States. The largest number, thirty-seven, went to Naval Training Schools. Thirty-one were sent to procurement offices, and others were assigned to the United States Navy Department headquarters, in Washington D.C., to the Potomac River Naval Command, and to United States Naval Districts and Air Stations. One, Lieutenant Dorothy Stratton, was later chosen to head the women reservists in the Coast Guard, known as SPARS.

The United States Navy lost no time in getting its first women officers into the mainstream of preparing those who followed.<sup>12</sup> Three members of that initial group were assigned as officers in charge of schools for enlisted women. On October 9, 1942, the three schools were officially opened: the Naval Training School at Bloomington, Indiana, for storekeepers, the Naval Training School at Stillwater, Oklahoma, for yeomen, and the Naval Training School at Madison, Wisconsin, for radiomen. A large contingent of that initial class remained in Northampton, to train the midshipmen to take on the duties of naval officers.

There was much excitement in Northampton on September 24, 1942, when the WAVES appeared for their first drill in uniform. Photographers seemed to be everywhere, and

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12. Daily Hampshire Gazette, September 25, 1942.



they had come from many cities and states. They represented newspapers, magazines, and other publications, and from the local area they included reporters and photographers from the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, the *Holyoke Transcript-Telegram*, the *Springfield Union*, and the *Springfield Daily News*.

The first graduation was held on September 30, 1942, in Faunce Hall, and it was not open to the public. I missed that graduation, as I was the Officer of the Day at Capen. However, I did receive my commission, and the right to wear a reserve blue stripe on my sleeve, indicating that I was an ensign. Those of us who were staying at the Midshipmen School did not have any stripes for graduation. Someone in authority decided that the women should not have gold braid, because of its scarcity during the war. Instead, the women had attractive reserve blue braid. But the program for naval women was so hastily developed that the producers of the braid did not have enough to go around. It was decided that the reserve blue braid should go to those women who were leaving Northampton after their graduation, as they would have more difficulty obtaining it than those who remained in the area. This accounts for so many photographs taken at graduation, showing some uniforms with stripes and others without stripes. In due time, there was a sufficient supply for everyone, and today, the women in the Navy have gold braid which is just as bright and shiny as that of their male counterparts.

When the Navy announced on September 21, 1942, that for the duration of the war the Wiggins Tavern at the Hotel Northampton would suspend its service to the public, it came as a shock to the residents of Northampton.<sup>13</sup> The rest of the hotel had already been taken over by the Navy. No longer would there be large cocktail parties, wedding receptions, or other large gatherings in the hotel's ballroom. No longer could the local residents enjoy a leisurely lunch or dinner in the tavern. However, there was one ray of hope — if they knew someone associated with the Navy in Northampton, they might get an invitation to dinner.

Having access to the Hotel Northampton was a distinct privilege for me. It provided an opportunity to introduce the town to the Navy. As soon as the tavern was converted to an Officers' Club, I invited a few residents who had been supportive

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13. Ibid., September 21, 1942.

of me in my civilian defense activities, particularly as the Ward Three Air Raid Warden.<sup>14</sup> My guests were thrilled with the opportunity to meet the naval personnel in a social setting, and they were particularly pleased to be able to go to the tavern. And the Navy men and women were equally pleased to have a chance to meet with local residents, as they wanted to be part of the community.

Neither my guests nor my Navy colleagues were aware of the great advantage I had, as a former teacher in Northampton. One of the tavern waitresses who was working in the Officers' Club was Angeline Pugliese, one of my former students at Hawley Junior High School. She had access to the printed menu, and that provided an opportunity to get the right information on the evening's menu. Usually at breakfast on Monday morning, she would whisper "Tuesday is a good night," or "Thursday is a good night." Immediately, I knew that the night she mentioned was the night that steak would be on the menu. That would make it the best night to entertain, as steak was a rare commodity during the years of rationing.

By combining my Northampton friends with my newly acquired Navy friends, I was able to widen the Navy contacts in Northampton. As time passed, more and more Northampton residents were enjoying the tavern as guests of other Navy personnel. By the time I was transferred to the Naval Training School in the Bronx, there was a good mix of town and Navy.

Mrs. Mary Bailey was one of Northampton's greatest boosters. She opened her historic house, "The Beeches," and she welcomed the female staff of the naval school to an afternoon tea. With the Woman's Civilian Defense Committee assisting her, she had several more delightful social gatherings, for both male and female officers. At other gatherings, the male officers and their wives enjoyed the warm hospitality of Mary and Sidney Bailey.

In the original group of WAVES were three officers who are now residing in the area. Dorothy Church Bailey and Doris Snodgrass Davis are living in Northampton, and the author of this article, Margaret Clifford Dwyer, who was the first WAVE from Hampshire County, lives in Hadley. Also in Northampton is Richard Holden, one of the male officers who staffed the Midshipmen School and who taught courses in naval history, navy

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14. At that time, Ward Three included all the streets and by-ways from the Main Street underpass to the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Bridge.

regulations, naval ships and aircraft, naval personnel, and drill, to mention a few. Holden was one of the officers to pioneer in the training of women for the Navy. He returned to Northampton after the war years, and he became president of the Northampton National Bank, which he served for many years.

Captain Herbert W. Underwood was the commanding officer at the new United States Naval Reserve Midshipmen School. Since no housing accommodations were provided for the male officers, they sought housing in the city and in the surrounding communities. Through the gracious kindness and generosity of Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, Captain and Mrs. Underwood had the honor and pleasure of living in her recently built "Washington Townhouse."<sup>15</sup> Mrs. Coolidge moved across the street, and she spent the duration of the war at the home of her friend, Florence Adams. The Underwood home became the center of social life for the staff and the community.<sup>16</sup>

No account of the activities of the Navy in Northampton would be complete without a description of Mrs. Underwood, who was affectionately known as "Mrs. Undie." She was a dash of color, a breath of fresh air, and the proud possessor of many attractive hats that she wore with distinction and drama. Everyone loved her and her hats, and she was a Navy legend in Northampton.

The merchants of Northampton, particularly those along Main Street, were quick to encourage the WAVES to patronize their establishments. Probably the best-known merchant was David Lipshires, owner of the David Boot Shop, on upper Main Street. It did not take the WAVES long to realize that all the daily marching on hard pavement demanded comfortable shoes. Dave had those shoes, and in short time the WAVES were marching in comfort, in the black leather oxfords that Dave had ordered especially for their comfort. He also had attractive black pumps and, when white uniforms became available, white dress pumps. It was reported in the local newspaper that Wednesday afternoons were set aside for shopping. The *Daily Hampshire*

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15. Daily Hampshire Gazette, August 28, 1942.

16. This house is now occupied by one of the first WAVES in Northampton, Dorothy Church Bailey, and her husband, M. Colburn Bailey, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Bailey, who lived at "The Beeches," the house that President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge bought when they returned from Washington, D.C., after he served as President of the United States.

*Gazette* stated that \$70,000 was being spent monthly by the students and their officers.<sup>17</sup>

A look at the midshipmen newspaper, *Sounding Off*,<sup>18</sup> showed a surprising number of local merchants advertising their wares. In addition to the David Boot Shop, there were advertisements for the Hampshire Bookshop, Filene's, Butler and Ullman (florists), tailor Martin Paddock, jeweler M. J. Kittredge, the Herrick photographic studio, Bib's Shoes, College Taxi, the V Shop (selling stationery and maps), the Academy of Music, the Manhan Potato Chip Company, along with Norma Lee Candies, 55 Taxi, Swiss Cleaners and Dyers, Spaulding Gardens, Hannigan Tailors, and Wilbur's Shoe Store. Wilbur's advertisement in that issue was a "WAVES Special," showing a black oxford of fine calf, for only \$6.98. That was the only advertisement that included a price. The United States Government had the largest ad of all, encouraging everyone to purchase war bonds.

As the months passed, and more women reported to Northampton, the novelty of the uniforms and the marching to class and meals became a daily routine. The women in blue were an accepted part of the Northampton scene, for some twenty-eight months, and Northampton's residents responded to the WAVES with their usual warm hospitality. The YMCA, then located on King Street almost across from the Hotel Northampton, opened a USO lounge, where the WAVES were welcomed in their spare time.<sup>19</sup>

The students at Smith College became accustomed to seeing marching platoons on their campus, and they probably felt concern about all the marching. They graciously made what must have been a great sacrifice, offering the use of their bicycles to the WAVES, on weekends, without charge.<sup>20</sup> And the WAVES gratefully accepted the warm and friendly offer, and they toured the nearby countryside, when time allowed.

The Pioneer Valley Association assisted the WAVES in finding day and weekend trips, by publishing a weekly list of

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17. Daily Hampshire Gazette, October 22, 1942.

18. See, for example, Sounding Off, April 6, 1943.

19. Daily Hampshire Gazette, October 15, 1942.

20. Dates from the Diary of the Smith College Alumnae Secretary, October 20, 1942, p. 2.

attractive nearby places. One hundred mimeographed copies of suggested walks, bicycle trips, and bus trips, were delivered to the WAVES every Friday. Listed among the suggestions were trips to Mount Tom, Chesterfield Gorge, Pine Island Lake, Highland Lake, and Hadley's covered bridge, which is no longer in existence. The association also made arrangements for the WAVES to attend square dances in the area. In February of 1943, the Association published a sixteen-page illustrated booklet, *The River Gods of Pioneer Valley*, that it presented to 1,200 WAVES at Smith and Mount Holyoke.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Northampton Country Club and the Amherst Golf Club invited Navy personnel to use their facilities. All of this indicated a genuine desire on the part of local residents to make the Navy feel welcome, even though there were no facilities for Naval ships in the Northampton area.

While other residents of Northampton were enjoying the presence of the WAVES, there was one who had a great concern about their effect on his "establishment." That was Postmaster Edward Cooney, who anticipated a tremendous increase in the amount of both incoming and outgoing mail.<sup>22</sup> It was a legitimate concern, with six companies of WAVES arriving in Northampton every two months for more than two years. With the franking privilege, the outgoing mail required no postage, but handling it meant that extra postal clerks had to be employed, increasing the expenses of the postal department. The postmaster was concerned about the impact of the Naval presence, but the effect of the location of Naval personnel in the area was not nearly as severe as he had feared. The opening of a substation of the Northampton Post Office in the Smith College Alumnae House in April of 1943, staffed by Naval personnel, eased the burden at the main post office on Pleasant Street.<sup>23</sup>

King Street was almost as busy as Main Street, as several business blocks were converted to war-time use. The Hotel Northampton garage, mentioned earlier, was the location of the original dispensary, and it was the center of activity for medical shots and physical examinations. Farther north on King Street,

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21. Daily Hampshire Gazette, February 9, 1943.

22. Ibid., October 23, 1943.

23. Ibid., April 28, 1943.

just beyond the Armory, the Navy commandeered another garage, and the building was used for the disbursement of uniforms.

It was in a Valentine's Day advertisement in the *Boston Herald* in 1943 that Filene's of Boston proclaimed itself as the "Proud holder of License No. 1 for outfitting the WAVES."<sup>24</sup> By then, Filene's had opened its branch shop on King Street, in order to be closer to the center of WAVE activities.

The WAVE publication, *Sounding Off*, made reference to the expansion of Filene's on King Street. On May 11, 1943, it reported that Filene's was planning to fit 2,800 uniforms in one week! To do this, it needed to take over another garage near the first one they were using. It was decided that it was more practical to do all alterations in Northampton, rather than to send the uniforms to Boston for the additional work. The expansion led to a comment about garages in Northampton. "Northampton WAVES are probably feeling the good effects of auto rationing, for they take their physical examinations and report for sick bay in one garage, fit their uniforms in another, and have them altered in a third."<sup>25</sup>

The need for expansion is understood when one reads the list of clothing recommended for new arrivals: one raincoat, two Navy blue serge uniforms, two Navy blue work uniforms, two white uniforms, two Navy blue shirts, three reserve blue shirts, two white rayon shirts, four white cotton shirts, two black ties, two reserve blue ties, four pairs of hose, a handbag, and three pairs of gloves.<sup>26</sup> An overcoat and additional uniforms and blouses were optional. Needless to say, all this work meant the employment of a great many local residents.

With the Mainbocher-designed uniforms selling for twenty-five dollars, some of the more sophisticated WAVE officers were concerned about the quality of the merchandise, as they were accustomed to spending more money for the suits used in their civilian careers. The Navy had negotiated well, and the fabric was outstanding, far superior to what was available on the open market.

The churches of Northampton opened their doors and welcomed the WAVES to their congregations. Before the arrival

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24. *Boston Herald*, February 11, 1943.

25. *Sounding Off*, May 11, 1943.

26. *Ibid.*

of Navy Chaplain Robert Andrus in mid-October of 1942, the WAVES had inquired about the various religious denominations in the city, their locations, and the hours of their services. I remember the disappointment of several WAVES when they learned that there were no Lutheran or Presbyterian churches in Northampton. They were directed to those churches in neighboring communities. One day, I was approached by a WAVE who was inquiring about Jewish families in Northampton. We were interrupted by some military activity, and it was several hours before we had an opportunity to continue our conversation. I suggested that she might get the information she was seeking if she contacted a member of the August family. She followed my advice, and she obviously was pleasantly surprised when she found that the Northampton telephone directory included a long list of Augusts. She told me that she was ready to call one of them.

The close proximity of St. John's Episcopal Church, St. Mary's Catholic Church, the Edwards Congregational Church, and the Baptist Church, found many WAVES attending their services on Sunday mornings. In one church, the ushers were instructed to seat the WAVES up front, and not to pass the collection plate to them. The members of the clergy welcomed the WAVES to their community, as their personal part of the war effort. The WAVES appreciated the thought, but they requested to be included in the entire church service, including the collection. With the arrival of Chaplain Andrus, the first station religious services were held at the Edwards Church.<sup>27</sup> Later, the First Congregational Church, farther down Main Street, was the center of religious activity for the WAVES on Sunday mornings.

Throughout their stay in Northampton, the WAVES were instrumental in bringing many prominent people to the city. Eleanor Roosevelt, the "First Lady," was the main speaker at the graduation exercises on March 24, 1943. An important message in her speech was that "Peace can only be permanent if we continue to work for it day by day."<sup>28</sup>

Rear Admiral Randall Jacobs, U.S.N., of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, was the speaker for the first graduation of midshipmen, and he returned again in May of 1944.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Daily Hampshire Gazette, October 16, 1942.

28. Ibid., March 20, 23, and 24, 1943.

29. Ibid., November 2, 1942.

Massachusetts Governor Leverett Saltonstall spoke at the graduation of the WAVES in July of 1943, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the WAVES.<sup>30</sup> Congressman Charles R. Clason of Springfield was the main speaker at the WAVES graduation that observed the second anniversary of the WAVES, in July of 1944. Another Rear Admiral, H. A. Theobald, U.S.N., spoke at the graduation exercises when it was announced that the SPARS, officer candidates for the United States Coast Guard, would be moving to the Coast Guard base at New London, Connecticut.<sup>31</sup>

At many of the commencements, members of the WAVES were speakers. One of the most popular was the head of the WAVES, Lieutenant Commander Mildred McAfee, who came to Northampton on many occasions. Other WAVES came from various bureaus in Washington, D.C., and some came from naval districts around the country.

Not all the distinguished visitors were commencement speakers. One of the first celebrities to visit Northampton during the war was boxing champion Gene Tunney, who came for a conference on a physical education program that would be appropriate for the women in the Navy.<sup>32</sup> The former ambassador to Japan, John Clark Grew, visited the Midshipmen School in 1944. At some point in the training of women for the Navy, it was announced that a certain number of them would be sent to Boulder, Colorado, to attend the Japanese Language School which had been established there.

There was much excitement in Northampton when the residents recognized the popular movie actress, Irene Rich, who had come to town to see her daughter, Frances, who was a member of the advance group in August of 1942. Frances, a sculptor and a Smith College graduate, later returned to Northampton, where she supervised the placement of her sculpture, St. Francis of Assisi, on the Smith College campus.

Helen Hull Jacobs caused a flurry of activity when it was announced that she was a midshipman at the Northrop House.<sup>33</sup>

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30. *Ibid.*, July 24, 1943.

31. *Sounding Off*, June 1, 1943.

32. *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, August 28, 1942.

33. *Ibid.*, February 4, 1943.



She was a world famous tennis star, having been the first woman to win the United States Singles Championship in four consecutive years. In 1936, she had also won the singles at Wimbledon.

There were many outstanding women who attended the midshipmen school. Some were well-known for their civilian successes, while others were like the author of this article, who just wanted to be part of the great effort to end the war as soon as possible. In September of 1943, the officer candidate class included about one hundred young women, who had been selected from the ranks of those who had enlisted in the WAVES. They comprised approximately one-fourth of the class.<sup>34</sup>

When I joined the Navy, I thought that my mathematical background would be my strong point. And in a peculiar way, it was, for a short time. Upon completing twenty days of training, I was appointed as officer in charge of the company which was assigned to Gillett House, and also as a drill and discipline officer. It was in the latter assignment that "mathematics" was helpful, as I drilled my company and led it on marches. After orders to come to attention and forward march, I fell into the Navy routine, "hup, two three, four." The only variation from this routine occurred when my company was marching to the Smith College athletic field. As we approached the bridge, we broke step so as not to damage the bridge. Then off again, to "hup, two, three, four."

When the new United States Naval Training School opened in the Bronx, I was assigned as commander of the first regiment of enlisted women reporting for duty there. Thereafter, I was assigned to the odd-numbered regiments. With a staff of 75 officers and enlisted women, I no longer had the opportunity to count for the cadence. The company commanders and platoon leaders took over that responsibility.

In September of 1943, I was transferred to Washington, D.C., where I was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Office of Naval Intelligence, Far Eastern Section. And there was absolutely no "mathematics" involved with my duties there! Returning to Northampton in 1947 required a great deal of adjustment, especially after an absence of almost five years. Teaching mathematics and English at Northampton High School meant a quieter life-style, no more rubbing elbows with the headline-makers in Washington, D.C., and no more chance meetings with the people who were developing a new world order

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34. Ibid., September 28, 1943.

following the end of World War II. Now, I had a more subdued life, and a more normal life-style. Working with young people, watching their development, and preparing them for college and life, became a full-time and satisfying vocation.

In conclusion, everyone benefitted from the experiences of the WAVES in Northampton. Those who had the privilege of contributing to the victory in World War II served the needs and interests of their country. And Northampton was a better city, for having shared its warmth and beauty with the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services. And I was the most privileged WAVE of all, for I was a native of Northampton, I was trained in Northampton, and I started my Navy career as a probationary ensign, in Northampton. Five years later, I left Washington, D. C., ending my Navy career as a lieutenant commander. In 1947, I returned to civilian life in Northampton, filled with joyous memories of my service to the United States Navy.