



U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program

Interview of **SPAR NORMA WILLIS CHOYCE, USCG (WR)**

Conducted by **DR. WILLIAM THIESEN, LANTAREA HISTORIAN**

Also Present: **GEORGE CHOYCE** and **BETTY**

September 9, 2007
New Jersey

INTERVIEWER: Okay. This is William Thiesen. I am the Coast Guard Atlantic Area Historian, and we are here in -- is it Cinnaminson --

MRS. CHOYCE: Right.

INTERVIEWER: -- New Jersey on September the 9th, Sunday, September the 9th. If you'd say your name and where you're from?

MRS. CHOYCE: My name is Norma, Norma Avery Willis Choyce. That's how they address me when I get -- I get things from the Women's Memorial. So they use --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- my maiden name, my middle name, and everything. Okay. We'd been living here in the house for 60 years.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: Is that all right? You'd want to know that?

INTERVIEWER: Where is --

MRS. CHOYCE: My husband built it too.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: Everything in it.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. CHOYCE: With her help.

MRS. CHOYCE: And my husband's name is George.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: George, and we call him "Sonny."

INTERVIEWER: Are you from here originally, or where are you from originally?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yes, right here, Cinnaminson. I wasn't born here, but we moved here when I was about three years old from Lansdale. I was born in Lansdale, Pennsylvania.

INTERVIEWER: When was that?

MRS. CHOYCE: July the 31st, 1924.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So what kind of led you into becoming a member of the SPARS?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, it was wartime, right?

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: And we were at that age, and the boys or all the men were going. They were being taken in, and the only thing it seemed for us to do would be nurses and working in a hospital, which I had absolutely no desire to do.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: So -- and really I picked on the SPARS because it seemed to be a smaller group of -- I figured it would be a smaller group of women, and maybe we'd get a little more attention, individual attention. That was part of it, you know. And I didn't want to be a secretary. So I put in for driving, for being a driver. So they were good about that. They gave it -- they gave that to me. That's what I did.

INTERVIEWER: Now you --

MRS. CHOYCE: In transportation.

INTERVIEWER: What year did you start? Was that in the '41 or '42, or do you recall?

MRS. CHOYCE: It was '44, I think it was. '44.

INTERVIEWER: '44?

MRS. CHOYCE: See, you had to be 20, and I wasn't 20 until that July. I think that was the reason. So I was in until '46, until the war was over in May of '46. So it was only a year and a half.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. So was there a reason you chose the SPARS over the WAVES or some of the other units that you could have been -- services that you could have been a part of?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, I didn't really know anyone at all. In fact, Betty, which I've known ever since kindergarten, first grade, she was in the Navy, and I didn't even know it until -- so I guess it was because I just wanted to do something maybe that might be worthwhile for the war effort. That's about the size of it, and I guess the SPARS sounded good because they weren't so big. It wasn't such a big -- all over the country, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. So you grew up on a farm, and you worked on farm up until that time you went into the service, is that right, or did you try other jobs?

MRS. CHOYCE: No, we -- I was working. I graduated from high school and was working in a -- for Sharp and Dohme, that now is Merck and Company.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: My mother worked there so -- and I went in, and I had started out in a real estate office, just a plain secretary work.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. I see. So where did you enlist? Was it here in this --

MRS. CHOYCE: Philadelphia.

INTERVIEWER: You went to Philadelphia?

MRS. CHOYCE: Philadelphia.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: We left from there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: On a train.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, we went from there by train on Thanksgiving Day.

INTERVIEWER: '44?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, in November. Yeah, Thanksgiving Day, in November.

INTERVIEWER: So they took you out to training, I guess, basic training from there, from Philadelphia?

MRS. CHOYCE: We went directly to Palm Beach, Florida. They had the Breakers Hotel. I think they had taken over the whole hotel. We did our -- it was tough.

INTERVIEWER: Somebody had to do it right?

[Laughter.]

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, after we had our basic training, I guess, then they put us to work in the kitchen. So we were kind of down there for six weeks altogether, and that was -- you know, it was more fun with all the girls and everything. The work wasn't that hard. We didn't -- and we did our exercise and out on the beach, and, see, the West Palm Beach is like an island. It's separate from the -- what am I -- mainland.

INTERVIEWER: Mainland. Yeah, right.

MRS. CHOYCE: The mainland. It was across that lake. So they had all the big hotels, all the fancy hotels over there, you know, at the time.

So it was interesting. We met a lot of girls in the same boat as us. Then they sent us to Norfolk, and we stayed there. I didn't go anywhere else.

INTERVIEWER: What did your -- how did your family feel about your serving in the Coast Guard, your parents and your siblings?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, you know, from the whole time I was growing up, all we heard from my father and his father was the war, that they spent, you know, World War I, and I guess when listening to him so much, I thought maybe I'd like to try it when they let the women in.

But, see, they didn't do what the women are doing today. You know, the women have joined the regular, and I don't know that I would have gone for that too much.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. When you were in basic, when you were in training there in Palm Beach, was the food pretty good, or was there a pretty --

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah, we had it good.

INTERVIEWER: Exercise was -- they weren't too -- it wasn't like the Marines or anything like that? It was --

MRS. CHOYCE: Say that again?

INTERVIEWER: As far as your exercising and your training and that sort of thing, was it pretty rigorous?

MRS. CHOYCE: It wasn't very rigorous, I don't think. I don't remember anyway.

Honestly, I remember the most about our food was we had fresh grapefruit juice to drink all the time. They had -- people kept saying -- the different ones, I had talked to before we went, kept saying, "Wait until you get the powdered eggs. Oh, you're going to hate them. They're going to be terrible. That's all you're going to have for breakfast," and I didn't see anything wrong with them. It tasted okay to me.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't know if we had powdered eggs or not. I guess I don't remember. We worked in a kitchen, I remember, and had this big dishwasher that went on a long -- you know, went like a railing all along, and all it had was -- did you ever work in the kitchen? It had like curtains in front of it. You know, that it went through the bath, I guess, and I remember helping to do that. I never saw anything like that before. That was better than washing them by hand

--

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- in the sink. Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get any kind of specialized training, or did everybody go through the same -- those six weeks the same sort of training?

MRS. CHOYCE: No, I don't recall that we had anything special, any of us. No matter what we did when they changed us, you know. Oh, I suppose we probably studied the history of the Coast Guard and things like that.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: But I don't remember too much.

Even when we got to Norfolk, some of the girls went in the office like there and then a couple of us went into the -- what they called transportation, but it was right in town. It was right in a -- well, we were in a hotel there, too, the Hotel Jefferson, and the garage was down near the Portsmouth River, where Portsmouth -- I see you had Portsmouth somewhere. Where do I see that? Oh, no, I guess you didn't.

INTERVIEWER: You're thinking about the Elizabeth River, where it came in close to James down there?

MRS. CHOYCE: Mm-hmm.

INTERVIEWER: You were in Norfolk, is that right?

MRS. CHOYCE: In Norfolk, right in Norfolk.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: And there was what -- what did you say? What was it, the Portsmouth River or the inlet or something? Because Portsmouth Naval Base was on the other side of it.

INTERVIEWER: There is the Elizabeth River.

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, I don't know. I forgot too much.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. The Elizabeth River separates Norfolk and Portsmouth.

MRS. CHOYCE: What is it? Which one?

INTERVIEWER: The Elizabeth River.

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah? That doesn't sound familiar to me, but that's okay.

INTERVIEWER: You weren't at Little Creek, were you?

MRS. CHOYCE: No, no.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: We weren't in Little Creek. We were right in the city.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: And we just like had a job. We got up in the morning and went down. Well, we had to -- it seems to me we could walk to the garage, and we ate out all the time too. We just, like, we weren't --

MR. CHOYCE: Rough life. Yeah, they had a rough life.

INTERVIEWER: Went to Florida and you had grapefruit juice, and then you went to Norfolk --

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. See, back in those days, that was great, because we didn't have the money to go do those things, you know.

MR. CHOYCE: Rough military life, you know.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. Well, all the other girls were there too. So I wasn't the only one.

INTERVIEWER: So when did you go up from Florida to Norfolk? That would have been a good six weeks. That would have been early in '45, I guess?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah -- no, wait. Yeah. Because we were still down in Florida over Christmas and New Year's. I remember going to mass on Christmas Eve, which we never did, of course. We weren't Catholics. So that was different.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: Mm-hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Did they ask everybody to go to mass, or you just do voluntarily?

MRS. CHOYCE: No. It was just something you could do if you wanted to.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: At midnight, they always had midnight mass at the Catholic Church. Well, at least they used to then.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't know now what they do.

Do they, Paul?

MR. CHOYCE: Don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever get to see Palm Beach or go out on the town at all?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah. Let's see. What did we do? We didn't go as much there as we did after we got to Norfolk. In Norfolk, we got time off, and we went to Williamsburg and all the different around places, you know, on our time off.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: We had weekends off and different times.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have drill instructors at all or chief petty officers when you were down in Florida or any kind of training, any enlisted people that were supervising your training?

MRS. CHOYCE: No. Wait. I don't know what you mean.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any chiefs? Chief petty officers, drill instructors down in Florida?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, yeah, we might have, but I don't remember that part. Of course, somebody had to take us out and put us through the exercises and all that kind of stuff, you know, tell us what kind of exercises to do and how to do it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: But, you know, what bothered me the most was we had to go out and salute like you do when you go aboard a Navy ship. You know how you have to salute? Well, we had to do that to get out and we had to go down to the basement and go out. That scared me to death. I don't know -- I don't know what I was supposed to do. I could remember being real -- I'd stand back and wait until somebody else went, so I'd know what to do. Crazy. We didn't have to do that too often.

But we had to go in parades. We had to have a parade, too, once and everybody out on the field, you know. I remember doing that.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: That was down at boot camp. That's what we called it.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. So you had exercises, you had classes, you went to drill, I guess, when you were in Florida?

MRS. CHOYCE: You mean like this kind of exercise?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, you know, we didn't do a whole lot, not like they show on drill and all. I don't remember doing that.

Did you do that? Did you?

MR. CHOYCE: That's why she went as far as --

MRS. CHOYCE: If I did, I forgot it at this point.

INTERVIEWER: So your rate was as a driver? Is that what you were officially considered? You were a driver?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. We had a specialist rating, TR, would be.

INTERVIEWER: TR.

MRS. CHOYCE: I mean, I've got it written down here. I'll have to tell you what it is. Specialist TR Third Class DD, whatever that means.

What does that mean?

MR. CHOYCE: TR would probably be transportation.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that makes sense.

MRS. CHOYCE: Mm-hmm. Yeah. There is DD, and there is WR. I don't know what that means either. You want to read it?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I can find out.

MRS. CHOYCE: It's in there, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Rating and discharge is Specialist TR Third Class DDWR, and those are all in parentheses, but we can probably find out later on.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, we had to take like an exam for each change in ratings, you know, and what's it say somewhere there? I got 85 percent or something.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I think it says there.

MRS. CHOYCE: But we didn't work at it real hard, you know. We did -- I didn't, you know, we didn't spend a lot of time doing it. I guess we didn't -- at that point, you don't worry too much about things.

INTERVIEWER: Well, did you get to choose your rating, or did they tell you what rating you were going --

MRS. CHOYCE: No, they just gave it to us. That's what all the drivers did.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: See, the women did most of the driving, I guess. They -- when we got to Norfolk, they used to like go to the bus station and pick up the other ones that were coming and take them to the ferry boat to go to -- across to Portsmouth and then -- and Little Creek, too, I guess.

ut I don't know if we're getting far ahead of this, but when I got to Norfolk, I was assigned to the Merchant Marine Inspectors, and they -- you know, the Coast Guard took them over sometime during the war.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: And they were, a lot of them, older men, and they had an office right down in the -- near the -- where did they have it? Down near the -- well, we always called it down near the river or whatever it was, I guess.

It was a big building, and I used to have to report to them every day. And I didn't know the building -- the building was here, and the parking lot was alongside of it. Well, it wasn't big enough to drive in, see.

I didn't know how to get the car -- the van in there, and one of them had to show me, you know, to pull up and back in and all that, things like that, but they were older men that were -- they really were merchant marines.

So we had to go around to where the ships were, so they did their inspection. I don't know what kind, but they had to inspect it anyway, somehow. So I was kind of attached to them for the whole time I was down there.

INTERVIEWER: So that was -- was that near where the Customs House is? Do you remember that, where the Customs House in Norfolk --

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, that's possible.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, down there near the waterfront.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. It's getting a little vague now, you know. It's only been 60 years. Right?

We were down there a couple times. We went down to Florida to see the hotel and all, you know, but that's been a long time too.

INTERVIEWER: Is the hotel still there?

MR. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah. The Breakers. Yeah, I think they --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: I think it was the Breakers. I have a picture of it here. It's still there.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. So you were basically attached to these maritime merchant marine people the whole time you were there as a driver?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, pretty much. That's all I -- well, we worked different hours, of course. So there were other times when -- like we did other things.

Well, I can remember taking the fellows in from maybe like at the train station. The ferry came in there, too, the Chesapeake ferry and the Greyhound bus and that kind of transportation we had then. That was --

INTERVIEWER: Did they put you through driver training, or did you already know how to drive --

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, I don't recall anything like that. They just took me out, took me out to see if I could drive. I remember that down in Florida, and I guess I passed. I didn't -- I don't recall ever getting anything else. None of us needed it, I guess. There were four of us girls attached, they called it, the DCGO. Is that right? District Columbia. CO, what would that be? Well, that's what they called the office building.

We were actually -- they were actually in the Post Office Building in the basement. They had -- they did all, like, the paperwork and whatever the girls, you know, there. So we were never on a base, like she was.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Sure.

MRS. CHOYCE: We were always in the city.

INTERVIEWER: So a typical day for you would be waking up real early in the morning and just driving all day, or could you describe what a typical day might have been during your service?

CHOYCE: I don't know what you mean. Start over.

INTERVIEWER: Well, what would an average day be like for you as far as --

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, it's just like we had a job. We'd get up in the morning and go eat, and we could eat wherever we wanted to because we were given subsistence, I think they called it then, and the hotel had a restaurant right in the bottom or on the street level, right?

So it was Greek. A Greek, he took care of all the girls real well.

And there was also a YMCA, and they would have a buffet, and we would go there, too, or we'd go to the drugstore maybe. We'd have breakfast, I can remember.

And when I started out, I'd go down. We'd have to go down and get the truck. It was usually a panel truck or a station wagon, and then I would go to pick up the men, and then we'd have to stop for coffee break. And we'd always stop. This place made homemade doughnuts. That's the first -- really, I learned how to drink coffee for lunch.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: Because I never drank coffee too much. It was rough, huh? Well, I guess I was lucky. That's all I -- I didn't ask for it. I didn't know what I was going to get.

INTERVIEWER: So did you stop for lunch, and then you'd go deliver people?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah. Well, lots of times if I had -- I'd have the guys. I'd take them to the ship. I'd have to stay out and wait for them, and then they'd call me in, and I could eat. And they'd let me eat lunch in their mess hall --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- on the ships. Not all the time, but once in a while I got to do that.

You know, I guess I sat -- I used to have to sit in the truck then and wait for them to come out until they got finished.

INTERVIEWER: It could take them several hours to finish their job?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, yeah. One time, they let me go. We went to a place where I could go swimming on the beach if I wanted to, but I was by myself. So I -- that wasn't real exciting, you know. I didn't like that too much.

But I enjoyed getting in the -- just getting down in the ship and seeing what that looked like. I wasn't used to them.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, they were Navy ships. Some of them were merchant marine ships too. I'm not real sure about that part.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go on board warships? Did you go on board warships, as well as -- any warships, Navy ships, as well as cargo vessels?

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't know about the warship part, but I know there were some Navy ships.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MRS. CHOYCE: As well as -- because we --

Where was that? Not Nags Head. You know where ags Head is down there?

INTERVIEWER: Outer Banks?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. Well, I was there quite often. They must have had a terminal in there somewhere because I can remember driving that whole

strip. Of course, nowadays it's all full of houses, but that was all -- you know where the Wright Brothers --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- flew their -- you know, well that would be all, you know, sand, that road all the way then, back during the war. Now I guess -- I haven't been down there since -- for a long time. I guess it's all houses built up now, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So why would you go down there? There was some merchant marine ships down there or --

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. I'm trying to think of the name of it. It wasn't Nags Head. What else? There is another place down there.

INTERVIEWER: Kitty Hawk.

MR. CHOYCE: Manny something?

MRS. CHOYCE: Manteo.

INTERVIEWER: Manteo Beach, Hatteras, or Morehead City?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, it was along there someplace.

BETTY: Kitty Hawk.

MRS. CHOYCE: What?

BETTY: Kitty Hawk.

MR. CHOYCE: Kitty Hawk.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. Well that wasn't --

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah. Well, there must have been some documents or something.

MRS. CHOYCE: I was on the beach.

INTERVIEWER: Morehead City? Was it Morehead City?

MRS. CHOYCE: No, I don't remember that. I don't remember going there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: It must have been for the merchant marines, I guess. They must have had someplace down there because I went several times, and he remembers me telling him that.

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And they were looking at ships, or do you know what they were doing?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, they were inspecting.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: They'd go on board and inspect.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: Maybe two of them would go together. Maybe sometimes just one would go.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Hmm. Okay. So what was typically something you would do off duty? Did you have any memorable experiences when you weren't having to drive or work?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. We -- well, especially a VJ Day or --

INTERVIEWER: VE Day?

MRS. CHOYCE: VE Day, that's right. VE Day or VJ Day. Of course, everybody celebrated, you know, all the fellows that were around there too.

Yeah. At nighttime, we used to go out with the fellows. We had a lot of dates, and sometimes we might go to a club. See, all that was new to me. I never did anything like that before. Maybe once or twice is all we did it. We didn't do --

From Norfolk, we went to Williamsburg and stayed a couple of days. We had time, and I remember we would go -- now, I'm not sure if it was Little Creek. We used to go on the beach.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: We could go real early in the spring, you know, because it gets -- it's a little earlier than here.

MR. CHOYCE: What about Virginia Beach?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, we went there once or twice, but we, more or less, went to this other one because it was like a -- it wasn't as crowded. It wasn't built up or anything. We'd just go and get in the sand dunes. We'd have where if the wind was coming one way, we could lay in the sand dunes and get sunburned. That was one of the other girls.

Well, you know, after the war was over or they -- then they moved us out of the hotel into a house. Somebody rented us a -- they gave us rooms. There were four of us altogether, and we still -- we still had -- you know, they still gave us money for all that, and then we still ate out and different things.

INTERVIEWER: So that was like in the fall of '45, and into '46 you moved into a house?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, yeah. Yeah, I forget exactly the date. I don't think I have that written down.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. What was the pay like? Was it pretty good? Do you recall what the pay was like?

MRS. CHOYCE: It's in there. I couldn't have told you. We got \$78 a month.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: And --

INTERVIEWER: You had a travel allowance amounting to \$13.15.

MRS. CHOYCE: To come home, I guess that's what, huh?

INTERVIEWER: Five cents per mile from Portsmouth.

MRS. CHOYCE: That doesn't sound like a lot now, does it?

But, you know, I saved enough money, I think. I saved like \$300, and when I come home --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- we didn't -- we weren't big spenders, but then, you know, the guys would pay for taking us out all the time. So I saved on -- we saved out on food.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. That's true.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. Well, they were ready, I guess. I don't know where -- I can't think where they lived. Whether there was a hotel or not, whether they were on a base. I don't remember that part.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Okay. I was looking over your record here, and it looks like you were -- did you ever get to Groton, Connecticut at all? Were you largely down in the Norfolk area, or did you ever get up to Connecticut?

MRS. CHOYCE: Nuh-uh, nuh-uh.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: No.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

MR. CHOYCE: That's where the Coast Guard Academy is?

INTERVIEWER: Right, New London. That's right.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, you were up at the Hunter, though, weren't you? That was the Navy.

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: Come down to see me once.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Down in Norfolk?

MRS. CHOYCE: Mm-hmm.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah? It must have been a busy place, that's for sure.

Can you tell me anything about Earl Myers? He was a lieutenant in the Reserves.

MRS. CHOYCE: About what?

INTERVIEWER: Earl Myers, the fellow that signed your -- was he your commanding officer or --

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, no. I don't know. I didn't know him. He wasn't the one that we worked under at -- I can remember him.

INTERVIEWER: What was his name, or do you recall much about your commanding officer?

MRS. CHOYCE: His name, you mean?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Or anything about him?

MRS. CHOYCE: I think it was Luther. Well, I don't know. I did know it, but I don't anymore.

INTERVIEWER: Did you develop any close friendships with any of the other SPARS that you worked with?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, I still keep in touch with two of them.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, one lives in Massachusetts. The other one lives down in Norfolk. She married a Navy fellow, and she -- they bought a house, and they've been down there ever since. Well, now, no, he died, and then she married another one, and he's dead. She had two girls, and so they keep an eye on her. She's a great golfer.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: But she was from Connecticut, too, and we had four in a room. The other girl, I think the other girl has died, too. I haven't heard from her for a long while.

That's something I want to ask you. Is there any way -- you know, the Women's Memorial -- okay. I got a lot. We've got a lot of stuff about them. They have supposedly -- I had to write up something about my -- about me and all, you know. We had to write a little something.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MRS. CHOYCE: There ought to be some way that we could -- like he could get his computer and pick it up, so that we can see what is on their computer, don't you think?

INTERVIEWER: To find out about your friends?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. CHOYCE: Or just to see what she got in there. You want to find out what you got in the Women's Memorial.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, but like she's -- like he says too.

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: You know, that way I could see if my other friend, whether she signed up or not, and I just wondered whether or what the -- I guess I could write and ask them or maybe -- because I get stuff from them all the time.

MR. CHOYCE: I could look online to see if there's something there.

MRS. CHOYCE: They wouldn't -- well, see that -- she would be -- she should be in on there too.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. I don't know, but I think Paul could probably check, and I can find out too. There may be some confidentiality issues. I'm not sure.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. I don't know. Maybe.

INTERVIEWER: But if you --

MRS. CHOYCE: But it doesn't seem like I'm going to get down there to see it.

We did get down there before it was completely finished. We saw it then.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: And I can't do all that traveling anymore.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MRS. CHOYCE: How was the pay? The pay was fine, as far as I'm concerned.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: It doesn't sound like much, though, does it? \$78 a month.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: It was probably okay back then, I suppose.

MRS. CHOYCE: And that was a very -- you know, that was after all my promotions.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Okay. What did you think about the uniforms that you had to wear?

MRS. CHOYCE: You know, I was happy with it. I still have some of it, but I couldn't dig it out.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: I can't really get it around me too much.

MR. CHOYCE: Well, you had slacks on most of the time, didn't you, hon?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. We wore long pants all the time. Yeah. Slacks.

INTERVIEWER: I'm on the second page here. How were you treated? Were you treated very well by other Coast Guard personnel, or did you feel like you were treated fairly?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah. We had no complaints. I don't remember having any problems with anybody. Even our officers were, you know -- were nice, and we didn't give them any hard time. In those days, you didn't do things they do today.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. I suspect that for a lot of those people, women in the service was unusual, and they -- I was just wondering if they might have thought that it was not a women's place.

MRS. CHOYCE: Not like you hear today, if you know what I mean, you know, where the men kind of take advantage of the women or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: That was another reason that I thought, like the SPARS, you know, the women that were in charge, the officers, they didn't have so many other girls to look after. You know, they could keep an eye on what was going on, you know, we never -- I don't remember even hearing about anybody getting in any trouble then. Those days were different than today.

INTERVIEWER: Well, Norfolk was -- my understanding is that Norfolk used to be kind of a rough town because of all the Navy people there. Was that not true?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, that wasn't in our -- with our group, that I know of.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: The only thing I was telling my husband here the other day, that the fellows, some of them might have resented the women because they could have had those cushy jobs that we had, you know.

And one of them -- I did know one that we knew from home. I heard him made a remark that what did you ever want to come join up in the service for, because he wasn't happy I'm sure.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: And I only saw him that once down there in Norfolk, but nobody gave us any problems. Even all the -- the people that lived in Norfolk couldn't have been nicer. We didn't have any problems with any of them, and we ate out a lot. And I don't think they resented any of the girls too much because most of the girls behaved themselves. We were always dressed up, you know, pretty much.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. So you had to wear your uniforms most all the time?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I suppose you could wear civilian outfits, too, when you were off duty.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. We always wore our uniforms then.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

MRS. CHOYCE: We had summer uniforms and winter uniforms.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't wear them when you were off duty, though, did you, or did you?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah. Yeah. We wore -- as far as -- I don't remember being allowed to wear -- it only was the shoes. We were allowed to wear like black loafers. Otherwise, we had, like, old lady shoes they were. They had heels like this, and they laced up.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: But they were comfortable, and we could wear white anklets. So they were -- I thought -- I got -- you got so you liked them.

I want to show you a couple pictures when you're ready.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MRS. CHOYCE: Like the uniform maybe --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- and the truck I drove, one of them. You know. I got to drive everything. I guess they had command car. I even drove an ambulance once. That was almost a disaster.

INTERVIEWER: When --

MRS. CHOYCE: That was something. See, they never even told me what I was supposed to do. You know, when you get to an intersection, you know, where you have the right of way just because you got that siren going? Not if somebody is coming at you, you don't. I learned that.

INTERVIEWER: So you had to drive an ambulance with somebody injured inside or --

MRS. CHOYCE: There was somebody in there, but it wasn't an Army -- I think it was a civilian one, if I'm not mistaken, but I remember doing it.

And we had the station wagons and the panel trucks, and they had a command car. I remember driving them sometimes. I had a lot of -- a lot something that they don't have now. That's for sure.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever drive anybody that was very high ranking or celebrities or anybody famous?

MRS. CHOYCE: No, I wouldn't say I did. Only those -- and then they were kind of captains, I guess. They had their -- they got their ranks from -- and I don't remember anybody coming in while we were there or that we had to -- we did have a parade or two. I remember being in a parade and carrying the flags and things like that.

INTERVIEWER: Was it still pretty busy after the war ended? Because you were there until '46, right?

MRS. CHOYCE: It didn't seem to be so busy. No more than -- we still put in our time. Like every day, we'd go down, and we'd sit and wait until they send us someplace.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever meet Captain Stratton, Dorothy Stratton?

MRS. CHOYCE: Not that I know of, no.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And the general public, I guess, you were pretty well received by people in the local area, too, it sounds like, by the local --

MRS. CHOYCE: I would say. There couldn't be any -- there was no --

INTERVIEWER: No resentment?

MRS. CHOYCE: I didn't want to go overseas. I can tell you that. There was no sorts of that or in combat.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Were there -- did you know any SPARS that did serve overseas or went overseas?

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't remember hearing about it.

Did you, Betty?

BETTY: No.

MRS. CHOYCE: Hear of anybody?

Well, the nurses of course, you know. Now, if I'd have been a nurse, I would have really been doing something worthwhile, I always said, but I guess they had a lot of them there doing the same thing. We didn't have any rivalries or anything like that.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. So did you feel your officers were all pretty capable and did a good job, your superiors?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. In fact, I don't recall seeing too many of them because, well, I guess working at the garage, like we were, they were our bosses, you know, and they were the men. Most of the men were the dispatchers and that kind of stuff, you know.

INTERVIEWER: You probably had contact with a commanding officer at some point, though, I suppose? Some sort of a chief petty officer or somebody that would be overseeing your activities?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, yeah. I guess they were, you know -- they were more -- they had a better -- more than I had, right?

INTERVIEWER: What are your thoughts about women who serve today?

MRS. CHOYCE: Say that again?

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel about women who serve in the military today, as far as serving in combat or --

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, if they want to do it, let them go ahead and do it.

I can see -- I can understand being in the service, why they would want to do it. You know, well, they get different -- today is a different reason, sort of, for going, I guess. I don't know if I'd want to be over there in Iraq or Afghanistan or any of those places. I guess there is plenty of them, like in Germany and Japan and different places, I suppose.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: Now, that might be a little different.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, absolutely.

Did you have any interaction with -- I suppose you met a lot of people in the Navy. Were your relations with Navy personnel pretty good, or did they have anything against the Coast Guard at all?

MRS. CHOYCE: The only thing I remember doing is like delivering something out to the Naval Air Base, you know, like, going and then flying in a plane to deliver a package or something. I remember doing that a couple times, but we never got to know anybody that way, you know, never saw them that much.

INTERVIEWER: And when you went on dates those were -- were those Navy personnel largely, or you said that you dated --

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't know. I can't hear what you're saying.

INTERVIEWER: You said that you had actually gone on dates with Navy personnel, or were they Coast Guard people?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh. They must have been Coast -- mostly Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: But I said I can't remember where they -- where the men stayed. How did we meet them? I don't know. I can't remember that so much.

But we -- we would meet them somewhere. We'd go to dances. They'd have a dance once in a while in different places for us.

They had like a Y, like a Y -- no. It wasn't the YMCA, but they had like a building that was kind of for recreation for both of us, for the women and the men. I guess that's where we met them, I suppose. That was right in town there someplace.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: But we didn't go there a whole lot.

INTERVIEWER: So you served into 1946. How much longer did you serve? When were you -- when was your last day?

MR. CHOYCE: May, wasn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, it was in May.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. We didn't stay around, but, like I told you, they moved us out of the hotels before we were discharged, and we lived -- I don't know how long. We lived there for two or three months, anyway, in this room in the town, and whoever rented us the place, they was -- they weren't -- we never saw them very much. So we didn't have any trouble with them. They were nice to us and everything.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: So everybody was civilized.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Sounds like everything was kind of winding down in --

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -- 1946 when you were discharged.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, we were offered to stay in, you know. They had asked us if we wanted to stay in, I remember, but, at that point, I didn't see much reason for staying in. So they didn't push it. They didn't push it.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So, when you left the service, were you discharged out of Norfolk and then you came back, or did you discharge out of Philadelphia?

MRS. CHOYCE: No. I guess we must have been discharged out of Norfolk. I don't remember going back to Philadelphia at all.

INTERVIEWER: Was it a sad time or a happy time? I suppose it was probably the last time you thought you'd see a lot of your friends there that you served with.

MRS. CHOYCE: Now I can't hear what -- I don't understand now what you're saying.

INTERVIEWER: What was the last day like before you left for home? Was it a sad time or --

MRS. CHOYCE: No. I don't -- I know my mother and father came down to pick me up. I remember that.

MR. CHOYCE: At Norfolk?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, Norfolk.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: There is not a whole lot to tell.

INTERVIEWER: What was your -- do you recall your most memorable experience while you were a SPARS?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, my. You didn't ask me that question, Betty.

I guess everything. Oh, I don't know. It was all so new to me, and we were glad the war was over, and, hopefully, we were going to start back with some sense of like it was before. That's all I can say.

My brother was in the service at the time. Like he, all his brothers were in.

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah. I was contacting her while she's still in the service. I got out in January, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MR. CHOYCE: And she was quarantined for a while, while she was down there in the hospital.

What did you have?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. Well, they thought I had the measles, but we had gotten, you know, those shots they gave us. Oh, I have to mention them, all those shots that we got.

INTERVIEWER: Is that when you started?

MRS. CHOYCE: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: You got shots when you started your service?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah, but these were booster shots they gave us, too, you know. And I think I kind of took a reaction to one of them, and I got kind of red around my face and all, and they thought I had the measles. I could have. I don't know.

They quarantined me in the hospital for about two or three days, and I remember I got so bored. I had to get up and help them wash the dishes because I didn't know what to do with myself. And I didn't have anything. All I had on was my -- that old robe they had and all. Well, that was only, though, about two or three days. It wasn't very long.

MR. CHOYCE: Towards the end there.

MRS. CHOYCE: And whatever it was.

I got the measles again after I got home, and we were -- I married and the boy -- one of our sons had the measles, and I got them again so -- but that's the three-day ones, you know. You can get them over again.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you want to look at some of these pictures here? You can describe those while we're recording.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, I wanted you to see. I could at least show you the truck.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: And that's one of the trucks I drove.

INTERVIEWER: Is that a Plymouth or a Dodge or something?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, don't ask me that.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: They look kind of beat up, don't they?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it's -- yeah, they look like they could be.

MRS. CHOYCE: And here is the hotel. Let's see. That's the picture.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. The Breakers?

MRS. CHOYCE: And here is another picture.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. It looks like they have a golf course there and palm trees and --

MR. CHOYCE: I don't remember that one in particular.

INTERVIEWER: So it was the official SPAR training station.

MRS. CHOYCE: That's Lake Worth, that water that you see.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: And here is our -- this is what we wore like when we were in boot camp. That was like our outfits then.

INTERVIEWER: So it was kind of a white skirt with --

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. It looks like it, doesn't it? I don't have that --

INTERVIEWER: -- blue top.

MRS. CHOYCE: I must have left that -- I must have left that somewhere.

Well, we were -- see, we were cleaning up the patio, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

MRS. CHOYCE: That was down at -- that was at Palm Beach, and I got a lot of pictures of all of us.

INTERVIEWER: It looks like the weather was pretty nice there.

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, yeah. I don't think -- I don't remember it raining at all.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Oh, you have some great shots. Did you take these pictures, or did somebody else?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, I guess I did. I don't know. You know, those old box cameras they used to have?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: That's -- they were -- now, there is my official -- one of my official, I guess, pictures.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: With my uniform.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have gloves on there?

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah, white gloves.

MRS. CHOYCE: What?

INTERVIEWER: White gloves?

MRS. CHOYCE: Looks like it, doesn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't remember that either too much, now that you mention it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a boat, too, or --

MRS. CHOYCE: No. I don't know where the boat came from. That was probably there, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Are these some of the friends that you --

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah --

INTERVIEWER: -- served with?

MRS. CHOYCE: They're not the ones that I -- well, I don't know. They're not my closest ones. Let's put it that way --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- until I get to that.

There is the kind of bathing suits we had too. See, they were all one piece, made out of wool.

INTERVIEWER: So is this training here?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. That's where we were doing our exercises.

INTERVIEWER: So you --

MRS. CHOYCE: She's up there. That was on the beach, and we were only like a block off -- a block or two off the beach.

INTERVIEWER: So every day you went down to the beach?

MRS. CHOYCE: There they all are, too, see. Yeah, I guess we went out everyday. I don't know. Well, I didn't -- you know, I didn't ask for it. I didn't ask for the job. I didn't know it was going to be like that.

Now, this is the one. This is in Norfolk. That's the Hotel Jefferson.

INTERVIEWER: Hotel Jefferson, okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: This is the Post Office Building where they -- are you familiar with Norfolk?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. In fact, that building still stands. That's still there. Yeah, the Post Office.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, that's where we had the -- where the -- what should I say? The transportation place was -- now, this is one of the things. This is one of the times we went to the --

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't know if -- is the Palmore [ph] still there?

INTERVIEWER: I don't know if it is or not. Now that's -- so that's you and that's one of your friends?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. That's Ski [ph]. That's one of the -- one of them.

INTERVIEWER: And these are Coast Guard personnel, it looks like.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, I guess they are, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: I never saw them again. So I don't know much.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: So there is --

INTERVIEWER: Is your panel -- this is your panel truck that you drove?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. See the long -- and the long pants we wore. We all wore --

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- long pants then.

MR. CHOYCE: That's the Post Office Building.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah. There is the Post Office Building.

It looks like you lost your hubcaps.

MR. CHOYCE: Taking that corner so fast.

MRS. CHOYCE: You weren't supposed to see all that stuff.

INTERVIEWER: So are these -- you just took those pictures, or are those patrol boats?

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't even -- what is this?

INTERVIEWER: It looks like some Coast Guard --

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, that's one of the Coast Guard -- the smaller ones.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MR. CHOYCE: She was a driver going to war. I was a truck driver going to war.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

MRS. CHOYCE: I guess it was.

INTERVIEWER: Runs in the family.

MRS. CHOYCE: These are Coast Guard.

INTERVIEWER: Personnel, yeah. That's the shore patrol?

MR. CHOYCE: Right.

MRS. CHOYCE: Florida, this one.

INTERVIEWER: So is that the car you used to drive, command car?

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't think so. That was when we were all having a good time, I guess.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: I got pictures.

INTERVIEWER: And these are -- are these all Coast Guard people?

MRS. CHOYCE: They're mostly -- the girl, the same girl --

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay, a friend of yours.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- that was there that I was friendly -- we were friendly with.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: I wanted to show you that. That's another one. We were having a gay old time, right?

INTERVIEWER: The Starlight Room?

MRS. CHOYCE: I have this one here, I wanted to show you. There is -- you know what that is?

INTERVIEWER: Is that a ration card?

MRS. CHOYCE: A ration card.

INTERVIEWER: For -- is it just for --

MRS. CHOYCE: For military.

INTERVIEWER: Is that for tobacco?

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't know what it was for. It looks like I had two or three of them punched out.

And these were more of the guys, I guess, we were going out with.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: This was down at the beaches that we would go. This is the girl I think that died.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: See, these were our summer uniforms. They were gray and white stripes, like.

INTERVIEWER: And then you had some kind of a tie?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. We had the blue tie, and there is one of my liberty -- my pass -- my liberty pass.

INTERVIEWER: So you came home?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. I come home maybe two or three times.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: On the bus one time, on the Greyhound bus, and then the train. I was telling him, like the train, if we took the train, it would drop us off at the ferry, and we'd have to get out and walk on the ferry because we'd have to take the ferry across the Chesapeake there. So then, if we took the Greyhound bus, the bus would take us right down in the middle of town, and we didn't even have to get out of the bus.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

MRS. CHOYCE: So I took that as much as possible because when you're traveling -- I don't like traveling by myself then.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: It was different. And these were times --

INTERVIEWER: Looks like you got some --

MRS. CHOYCE: -- we were at the beaches.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, you got to the beach a lot. You went to Virginia Beach or --

MRS. CHOYCE: Most of this, like was Ocean View --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, Ocean View.

MRS. CHOYCE: Ocean View.

INTERVIEWER: Right, mm-hmm. Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: That's where I was trying to talk about.

Let's see, now. We have come to the one I want. Now, part of this is at the house. That's the house we were --

INTERVIEWER: Okay. It looks like a big house.

MRS. CHOYCE: I'm pretty sure that it.

This is the one here. This was VJ Day.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: At that place where I told you where we had our recreation.

INTERVIEWER: The YMCA or something?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, all the guys, and somebody stole my hat, and then my girlfriend, she stole somebody else's hat and gave it to me. And I didn't like that. I was so mad about all that. Can you pick me out there, kind of?

INTERVIEWER: It looks like you had a great time.

MRS. CHOYCE: Then my girlfriend, see, she sent me -- the one that lives down there now.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: They had a big tadoo on D Day, and she called it -- she said it was the -- that's the same picture.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: And I said it was VJ Day. She said it was VD Day. So I don't know. I don't argue about it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Interesting.

MRS. CHOYCE: But everybody looked happy, didn't they?

INTERVIEWER: Yep.

MRS. CHOYCE: This is the girl that -- here is Ski. Her name Helen Perkoski [ph] --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- and this girl was Irene, and they were in the room with --

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, I still keep in touch with both of them.

INTERVIEWER: And your name was Willie? Was that your nickname?

MRS. CHOYCE: They called me -- well, my last name was Willis.

INTERVIEWER: So they just called you Willie?

MR. CHOYCE: They called her Willie.

MRS. CHOYCE: So they called me Willie.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: Everybody called you -- you were called by your last name all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were?

MRS. CHOYCE: They don't call you by your first name.

INTERVIEWER: What was Ski's --

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah. You haven't been in the -- you've been in the service, huh?

INTERVIEWER: No.

MRS. CHOYCE: No?

INTERVIEWER: What was Ski's last name?

MRS. CHOYCE: Perkoski. She was a Polish.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Good pictures.

MRS. CHOYCE: You know, she married her brother.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MRS. CHOYCE: And there were three or four kids, and his wife had left him with those kids, and she married him and raised them. So she did good. Her name was Anderdonk [ph].

INTERVIEWER: Oh, my.

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't know. What do you call -- what kind of relative do you call that?

INTERVIEWER: Wow, yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: That's Dutch. Dutch?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: Dutch. See, I guess that things are kind of fading out.

INTERVIEWER: Looks like it.

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, there is some more of the parade, and this is after we got home.

INTERVIEWER: And this is in -- let's see. Oh, yeah, you were there through '46. So, yeah, you would have been there for the parade.

Is that right in front of the post office? Is that the post office?

MRS. CHOYCE: It looks like it, doesn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MRS. CHOYCE: What's it say? Granby. Granby Street. Yeah, I remember the name of that. That Main Street goes all the way through Norfolk, doesn't it, pretty much?

INTERVIEWER: Right.

MRS. CHOYCE: Do they still have all those crape myrtle bushes on the edge between the curb and the sidewalk?

INTERVIEWER: Some streets. Not all of the streets. Some of them.

MRS. CHOYCE: On that street especially, they were all -- but they were, you know, and those -- they weren't that big then. I just wondered if they lived, you know, if they lived through all those years.

INTERVIEWER: They would be pretty big by now if they --

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah. I'd think some of them died of old age. You know what I mean?

INTERVIEWER: There are a lot of crape myrtle down there, though. I'll tell you that.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, they grow -- you know, they can grow crape myrtle up here. A lot of people in their developments have growing.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: Not too far from here, there is one as big as a house and we watch it every year. It's so pretty. Okay. I guess that's enough of that. I should put this away.

INTERVIEWER: Any other pictures that you have at all or --

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah. Well, they're the family pictures and like that.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. That's fine.

MRS. CHOYCE: And well, yeah. This one.

MR. CHOYCE: Oh. You have one?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, this, I wanted to prove to you I'm a charter member.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. All right.

MRS. CHOYCE: I guess I'll just -- now, this is something that I got. I don't know whether you would know these people. I got it a long time ago, but it was a letter from the Indiana University.

INTERVIEWER: Oh.

MRS. CHOYCE: That they were going to do what you're doing.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MRS. CHOYCE: Something, I guess, maybe something on that order, but I never heard from them since. She did write and say -- she said something here about don't hold your breath.

MR. CHOYCE: Sounds like the plumbing dried up.

MRS. CHOYCE: But she must have written a couple -- they must have written a book, don't you suppose, at least?

INTERVIEWER: Indiana University has a very big oral history program, which means taping interviews like these. So they probably collected a lot.

MRS. CHOYCE: Maybe they did it and --

INTERVIEWER: Maybe they ran out of time or money. I don't know.

MRS. CHOYCE: Or they finished it, but that was --

INTERVIEWER: Possibly.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- how long?

INTERVIEWER: That's a long -- that's 20 years ago.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, I didn't hear any more from them. I just keep it, in case they --

INTERVIEWER: True.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, they might -- they might put in what I gave them, you know, whatever.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it could -- I suspect these people may not still be employed there.

MRS. CHOYCE: Just kind of check it out and --

INTERVIEWER: But I can try to check into it for you. It looks like it's the dean.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, do you want to take it? You'll have to send it back to me.

INTERVIEWER: No, that's okay. I'm kind of writing some notes here myself.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, sure.

INTERVIEWER: Just a few more questions, and then we're done.

MRS. CHOYCE: Okay. I probably left -- you'll have to turn it around.

INTERVIEWER: Are there any parts of your Coast Guard career that we've left out that you can -- that you think we haven't covered?

MRS. CHOYCE: I can't imagine.

Can you, dear?

MR. CHOYCE: It sounded like you covered it pretty well.

MRS. CHOYCE: How exciting it was.

INTERVIEWER: You thought it was very exciting?

MRS. CHOYCE: That what?

INTERVIEWER: You thought it was very exciting?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, for us. I'd never been anywhere in my life.

MR. CHOYCE: She wasn't in the military. I mean --

[Laughter.]

MRS. CHOYCE: Now, what did you say, dear?

MR. CHOYCE: You weren't in the military, hon, living in the hotels and working at a building down in there.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, I didn't know what I was doing.

MR. CHOYCE: Well, that's all right. You wasn't the only one that --

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, we were subjected to all the --

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- all those things.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever see any prisoners of war or any results?

MRS. CHOYCE: Not that I know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: No. We didn't even know they had prisoners of war.

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah. How about that? I mean, I never knew how -- how many that were shipped to this country.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. CHOYCE: Coming up on, you know, History Channel now.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, yeah.

MR. CHOYCE: I never heard anything about it.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, there was --

MR. CHOYCE: I mean, this is 60 years afterwards, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. CHOYCE: They'd call the troops to Africa, and they send a boatload of POWs back here.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah.

MR. CHOYCE: I mean, even when I come home, I never heard anything about any POWs around here or anywhere.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah.

MR. CHOYCE: But they were in here by the thousands, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely, yeah.

MR. CHOYCE: And then when I was England, okay, they were walking the streets over there, the Italian POWs.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm.

MR. CHOYCE: They could sit in the movies with you and everything else.

INTERVIEWER: Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah. Yeah. That's true. Well, I guess, do you have any thoughts about today's Coast Guard now that you've -- you're a veteran of the Coast Guard?

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, I'll tell you, we had my nephew that went to the --

MR. CHOYCE: The Academy.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- Coast Guard Academy, and he went all the way through until his last year. And he disobeyed one of the rules, and they kicked him out.

MR. CHOYCE: They kicked him out, and he had to pay for his training.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: I thought that was such a shame.

MR. CHOYCE: That was his doing.

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't know what he's doing now. He's doing something.

MR. CHOYCE: Well, he's working with something in shipbuilding or, you know -- yeah, he got up there in Groton, and that was his doing so.

MRS. CHOYCE: But, otherwise, we don't get tangled up with --

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: -- too much. Even the American Legion. Now, my father was big in American Legion. He thought a lot of that, but we don't join things like that, somehow or another. We don't --

I don't know of anything else. I've probably told you everything that I felt enough to know.

INTERVIEWER: Do you --

MRS. CHOYCE: Do you have to write all that up now?

INTERVIEWER: Well, it's transcribed actually.

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Somebody just types it.

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, okay.

MR. CHOYCE: Pick the highlights out of it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel like your days in the service helped you later in life at all?

MRS. CHOYCE: Oh, I wouldn't say so.

MR. CHOYCE: By the indication, she doesn't drive now.

[Laughter.]

INTERVIEWER: So, when you came back -- were you married after the war?

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah.

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah, we got married in '47.

INTERVIEWER: In '47. Okay.

MR. CHOYCE: So I got out in '46, January, and she got out in May of '46.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

MR. CHOYCE: And then that March -- well, we went together.

MRS. CHOYCE: Well, we had known each other practically all our life.

MR. CHOYCE: Yeah.

MRS. CHOYCE: Because he lived where I did. We went to the same church and everything.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MRS. CHOYCE: And, Betty, we knew Betty since first grade. We didn't have to go to kindergarten. They didn't have kindergarten in those days.

Well, I do kind of help out. Like I donate to this once in a while, and I'm glad they got something down there, I guess. They're going to have a -- they're not going to have room in Washington for everything, with all these wars they got, they keep coming up with. Huh?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. It's a lot of memorials, that's for sure. Good. Well, I guess I will turn it off, then.

MRS. CHOYCE: Yeah, let me hear what it says a little bit.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much.

MRS. CHOYCE: I just want to hear my voice.

INTERVIEWER: Sure.

MRS. CHOYCE: I don't have to hear the whole thing.

INTERVIEWER: All right.

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END OF INTERVIEW

