



GENEVIEVE PARKER WAVES OFFICER – 1944/1945

Interview takes place in Genevieve’s home on 10 October 2013. As the interview begins, she is examining a letter, written by a Wave, that Andy brought to the interview. The letter is signed “Gene,” so we were hoping she might have been able to identify the author. Genevieve’s maiden name is Kolar.

Introduction	<p><u>MUSIC</u></p> <p>Welcome to the Dahlgren Centennial Celebration – A Century of Innovation. We hope that this and our many other products, events and offerings will showcase what Dahlgren has accomplished during its last 100 years.</p> <p>Throughout our history, we’ve interviewed some of the most prominent minds, leaders and innovators that have been here, and we’re opening up the vault to share them with you this year.</p> <p>Today we are honored to listen to the story of Genevieve Parker, a former WAVES officer on the base. WAVES, or Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, was the World War II branch of the U.S. Naval Reserve. Dahlgren had a number of WAVES stationed on the base, whose primary job was to compute range tables during the increase in gun testing. In 1944/1945, Ms. Parker was one of Dahlgren’s first WAVES, and her future husband, Edelen “Ace” Parker, worked on base testing bombsights.</p> <p>Our story jumps in as Ms. Parker is examining a historic letter from our collection that is written by a WAVE.</p> <p>Let’s listen to Ms. Parker!</p>
R. Parker	Who was the commanding officer when you were there, Mom?
G. Parker	The first one was Captain [David I.] Hedrick.
Revelos	Hedrick.
G. Parker	Hedrick.
Revelos	I think that’s who she was talking about because I did check it over, and it looked like it was dated to the time when he was the base commander.





G. Parker	Captain Hedrick. He left, though, and I don't know who the next one was.
Revelos	After that it was a rear admiral according to the records. It was Turner Joy who ended up moving up the ranks. I think he became a vice admiral and commanded just about all naval forces in Korea. So, he went on after he left the proving grounds.
G. Parker	Did you ever see that 16" gun?
Revelos	Oh, they still have them all there! And they have the—
G. Parker	This was the projectile [<i>holds up her hands approximately 2 feet apart</i>]; this big around. Well, I used to have one, about a 5". Or maybe 6 or 8, I'm not sure.
R. Parker	Nobody's going to take it too far.
G. Parker	Well, you used to try and lift it as a little boy!
Revelos	I wouldn't be able to lift a 16"...
R. Parker	No, no. And the ones that we used to play with that were laying all around the house here, those were... I think they were 3".
G. Parker	Oh yeah they were
R. Parker	No . . .
G. Parker	I used to have a couple because we thought they were neat.
Revelos	Yeah, they still have the 18" gun that they tested, I believe, in the '30s just prior to the war, and that was the biggest one ever cast in this country.
G. Parker	18?
Revelos	An 18". The Navy figured out that they didn't really get much extra out of those two inches that was worth putting on a ship.
G. Parker	I can see that.
Revelos	It's a huge shell though!
G. Parker	Oh my gosh. Can you imagine? That would wreck a ship in a hurry, wouldn't it? And when they used to test those guns, because it was a proving ground, and they would test those guns. And oh my, the pictures would fall off the wall, and





	the furniture would all shake and rattle! Oh, it was really... It was fun.
Revelos	Now, did they blow a whistle before they shot the guns off? Do you remember anything like that?
G. Parker	No, I don't think so. Not that I know of. Certainly the people in the area must've had to go into some kind of shelter. But yeah, they used to fire those guns.
Revelos	We still get a lot of noise complaints from Colonial Beach, and we try and tell them, "Geez at least we're not shooting the 16 anymore."
G. Parker	See, my husband [Edelen "Ace" Parker] was a... What did you call him? Dive bomber? He was testing bombsights anyway. So he said they dropped missiles all over the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay! And once they dropped it right in a woman's backyard. Boy, they heard about that!
Revelos	I imagine so! I think there was a newspaper article about that.
G. Parker	Is that true?
Revelos	And it was either here or at Indian Head that the woman had a cow and she claimed that the cow stopped producing milk after that. And so the base commander bought the cow, which apparently never did produce milk ever again!
R. Parker	Never had a calf; that's the reason.
G. Parker	That's right. Never had a calf...
R. Parker	Down in the Northern Neck, particularly down in King Copsico, every now and then they'll find a shell that either skipped on the water and landed up on land or else they just landed on land. They were getting ready down in Montross, there's a sort of a security group that's built a complex down there. And they have some firing ranges and racecar tracks...
Revelos	I've been down there before.
R. Parker	And that was such a stir about how this is going to create noise pollution, it's going to completely ruin the environment, nobody will ever come there again. And I remember the meeting, and I said, "Well look," I said, "If the people had've complained, like you all are complaining, when they built Dahlgren, this whole place would've never had any economy!"





G. Parker	Wouldn't even be there!
R. Parker	And when those guns went off—they were worried because people a quarter mile away might hear something, but when those guns in Dahlgren went off, you heard them all the way up the east coast!
Revelos	All the way to the Chesapeake, yeah.
R. Parker	Every now and then you still hear them.
Revelos	Oh, if the atmospheric conditions are correct and there's a low cloud ceiling...
G. Parker	Do they still fire those guns?
R. Parker	They do. And they shoot over at [Fort] AP Hill once in a while. So yeah, they aren't doing like what they were doing when you were there.
Revelos	There's also a bomb range at Indian Head, not for air-dropped bombs or anything like that, but for the EOD technicians to train, so that might be what you're hearing out this way, too.
R. Parker	Now and then, there's explosions and things rattle. But not like it was in those days.
Revelos	No, not like in those days.
G. Parker	No, man, they'd shake you right out of your seat.
Revelos	Well, I guess the first thing I wanted to know was just tell me a little bit about how it was you decided to become a Wave Officer?
G. Parker	Oh, that. I'm from the Midwest—Wisconsin. Well, let me tell you. The war had just begun, and they were taking all the men. I mean, you didn't have to volunteer in those days; they just took you. And I was teaching school, and they took all the men right out of high school. And I said—and I had a boyfriend—and I said, "Shoot. This is no fun. I'm going where the guys are!" So actually, there was another teacher and myself. We made the decision. So we went to Milwaukee and found the Navy Recruitment Office and signed up.
Revelos	And that was that!
G. Parker	That was that! And then we went to Officers' Training in, I think, Boston. I think it was Boston or up in Massachusetts—well, Smith College, if you've ever heard of that girls' fancy college up there. They opened up their college to the Navy to





	<p>train the women officers. So we went up there for, I think it was three months to learn how to be a naval officer. And then we were stationed, and I was stationed—we all got our orders, so to speak, and all these girls are standing around looking at—“Oh, I’m going to New York.” “Oh, I’m going to Philadelphia.” And I looked at mine, and I said, “Did anybody ever hear of Dahlgren?” Nobody had, and nobody else got orders to Dahlgren. It was just me.</p> <p>And I had to get [there] from Boston, so I took a train, I guess, and down to Baltimore, and then I asked, “How do I go to Dahlgren? Does anybody know where that is?” So then I had to take just a little old bus into Dahlgren. And this is another funny thing. So when we got close, I went up to the driver—because I didn’t know anybody, I didn’t know where I was going—and I said, “Is there a hotel in this area?” And everybody—because they were looking at this Wave Officer—everybody, the whole bus broke out laughing. Because, in those days, Dahlgren was nothing, you know? And everybody laughed, and she said, “I don’t think so.”</p> <p>And anyway, there were two Wave Officers before me that were there, and so they knew I was coming, so they came out to meet me. So, I was saved. [Laughs] Those were the days!</p>
Revelos	So, what was it like to check in aboard the base? Because, as you said, there was not much going on there, but the work had to have been quite feverish. It sounded like they worked very long shifts six, seven days a week.
G. Parker	Oh it was a pretty lively going thing at Dahlgren because they were testing all these big guns, as I told you. And they were all the way from the 3”, 5”, whatever, up to the 16” guns, so... We had a good time because we were only three Wave Officers, and so we got invited to—even the captains and the admirals invited us to—we were sort of a phenomenon I guess, so we were invited to all the parties, all the admiral’s, captain’s parties, so we were kind of... I said, “Boy, I never felt this special before!” [Laughs] But it was fine. It was good.
Revelos	And how many enlisted WAVES were there? The enlisted WAVES at Dahlgren? Was there a barracks of enlisted WAVES?
G. Parker	Oh yes, they lived right with the enlisted sailors, actually. They had a separate hallway or something, but they lived right in the same barracks as the enlisted men. So we kind of had to watch out for them, and one of us had the “duty,” so to speak. Every night we had to go over and sleep with the enlisted WAVES so they didn’t get into any trouble.
Revelos	And from the letter there, the author of that letter says that they did get in trouble quite occasionally!





G. Parker	I'm sure they did because there were sailors there!
Revelos	What were some of your job responsibilities?
G. Parker	Well I was sent there to make range tables. You know in those days they didn't have—well, they had a formula, and you had to put in the speed of the bullet, the weather played a part, the wind, the temperature... And it was a formula that incorporated all these things. And you had—see this was the range table [saying], "When you shoot the gun, where does it go? Does it go straight up? What angle?" And you had to put all that in this formula to find out whether you were going to hit your target or not, so that was the formula, so that's what we did. We made range tables, and you probably had to do it for every angle, had to refigure these tables. And they were huge! And they didn't have any—no calculators. No calculators. You had to do it all with a paper and pencil.
Revelos	Were the range tables like a big long brass table?
G. Parker	Oh no, no. They were tables. Like <i>x plus y equals</i> that kind of a table.
R. Parker	Like a chart.
G. Parker	Yeah. They were that kind of table.
Revelos	The reason I ask is there's—they call it the range table, but it's a big brass... It used to be used as a table that they charted shots down the range, and I didn't know if that's what you were referencing. And now they have it set up as kind of a display with a bunch of old shells, including the 18".
G. Parker	Really? I don't know about that at all.
Revelos	So, tell me a little bit about the isolation of Dahlgren. Did you get liberty? Were you able to go out on the town and have a little fun?
G. Parker	There wasn't any town. Fredericksburg was the closest town. And so that's where—I didn't much because I met my husband, so I usually was out with him. But yeah, they did. The enlisted girls and the officers—they went to Fredericksburg. That was where they went on Saturday or whenever they got freedom. They went to Fredericksburg.
Revelos	And how long were you in Dahlgren?
G. Parker	Just a year.





Revelos	Just a year. And it would've been the late part of 1944? Early part of 1945?
G. Parker	Yeah.
Revelos	So, tell me a little bit about meeting your husband at Dahlgren.
G. Parker	Well we were lucky because the Wave officer—we had a special house. We didn't live in the BOQ with them, but we had a special house. But we ate our meals with the men, with the bachelors' quarters. So we saw them three times a day, or twice anyway. And that's where I met him. And the Wave officers, being women, every once in a while they'd have a little party or before dinner they'd serve drinks or something like that. And my husband came over a couple of times, so then we'd walk over to dinner together, and that's where I met him.
Revelos	He ended up advancing in the ranks and moving on from Dahlgren?
G. Parker	Oh yeah! The first time I met him, he was a lieutenant and then I think within a couple of months he went to lieutenant commander, and then commander, and by the time we were married, I think he was commander. But then the war came along, and then he was promoted captain right away.
G. Parker	1945. World War II.
Revelos	Now was that the Korean War?
R. Parker	He wasn't a captain in 1945.
G. Parker	What was he?
R. Parker	He was a commander.
G. Parker	Commander?
Revelos	He was a commander in 1945?
R. Parker	Yeah, I can remember when he was a commander.
G. Parker	No, you can't because I don't think we'd gone together three months when he was promoted to lieutenant commander because I remember the party!
R. Parker	Right, but we're talking about captain.
G. Parker	Oh, Captain! Oh, no...





R. Parker	He was 57—
G. Parker	--About the time you were born?
R. Parker	No, about the time when I was about ten or twelve.
G. Parker	Oh, then he was promoted—
R. Parker	Remember, he stayed a commander thirteen years.
G. Parker	You're right. You're right.
R. Parker	He was commander for a long time.
G. Parker	That was the longest period, yeah thirteen years, and then he made captain.
R. Parker	And he was in the Navy about twenty years when he made captain, maybe a little—maybe eighteen.
G. Parker	During the war, they promoted people fast. So he went from a lieutenant to a commander in just maybe a year, and...
R. Parker	Then the war was over. He was a commander when the war was over.
G. Parker	Yeah, that's right.
Revelos	And then he ended up staying in until he did twenty or thirty years?
R. Parker	Thirty-five.
Revelos	Thirty-five years! Wow, that's quite a career.
R. Parker	He retired in '72. I think he enlisted, or he got started, in '37.
G. Parker	'37. Went right out of college.
R. Parker	Got his wings in '37 or '38, and then he retired in 1972.
Revelos	And he was active in some of the testing of bombsights?
G. Parker	Oh yes. Oh, he was on active duty that whole time.
R. Parker	: His... I don't know how much you want to know about his career, but when he was there, he was a test pilot, and they were doing a lot of things. They





	<p>assisted in those range tables. They used to actually fly the airplanes and watch the bullets. They could actually see them going through the air. He used to tell me about that where they would fly, and they could see where the bullet was. They could see the shadow on the water of the bullet, and that would enable them to help locate it going through the air. Of course they couldn't catch it, but they could see it! Because they're big. They're like a big bird flying. And then of course they were testing the Norden bombsight to put it into the Navy's use. Of course the Air Force and Army were testing it. Everybody was looking at it, how it had applications in the Navy. And I think that's primarily what he did at Dahlgren was work on the development of the Norden bombsight—</p>
G. Parker	<p>Well he actually did the testing. He flew the airplane, actually tested these bombs, dropped the bombs.</p>
Revelos	<p>It was a huge part of the war effort at that time at Dahlgren. In fact, we had a prototype bombsight—Norden bombsight that was actually discovered in a closet a little while ago in one of the offices. It was really something. It was neat!</p>
R. Parker	<p>He was probably the senior ranking aviator in that test group, if I'm correct.</p>
G. Parker	<p>I would say he probably was.</p>
Revelos	<p>He probably was.</p>
R. Parker	<p>I don't know how many officers were flying out of Dahlgren at that time.</p>
G. Parker	<p>Oh, not many at all because it was not an air station at all. They just had this one division where they were testing the bombsights.</p>
R. Parker	<p>And he had been an Aeronautical Engineer major, so I think they were looking for engineers to do their test work. I don't think Patuxent River even existed then, if it did it was not the test facility it is now.</p>
Revelos	<p>: Yeah, the testing, the aviation stuff at Dahlgren started in the '20s. And believe it or not the first pilotless radio-controlled flight took place in 1924 in Dahlgren, so think of all the decades it took for that technology to be refined. And as a matter of fact—they did send a pilot along in another plane to fly alongside because they were concerned that they were going to lose control of it and it would crash somewhere. And so the pilot that accompanied the drone filled his cockpit up with bricks in case they had to start chucking them and take it down.</p>
R. Parker	<p>I never heard that before! That's a good piece of trivia!</p>





G. Parker	Where's that?
Revelos	This is in Dahlgren. So what year do you think your husband came to the base?
R. Parker	Do you know when Dad went there? He was there obviously when you got there, but how much sooner did...?
G. Parker	I don't think too much, maybe a couple of years. Within a short time. Because that was when the war was really just getting started.
R. Parker	When he got there.
G. Parker	Yeah, when he got there. He had joined the Navy and went to flight school before the war was even declared, so he was already a pilot, when war was declared, and ready to go. He was already trained.
Revelos	I'm kind of curious about being a Wave officer in those early years. Here you are, a woman, which is kind of unusual for Dahlgren, and an officer. You know, the sailors have to salute you and stuff.
G. Parker	Oh, they did!
Revelos	What were the gender relations like in those days?
G. Parker	Oh, well, we didn't see the men at all. Then the enlisted WAVES came, and—well, we didn't associate with them, but we had to... Oh, what do you call it? We were over them, sort of, so to speak. So we had to—I was not the Senior Officer. Another girl had come just a year before I did, I think, and she was the senior. She was a JG, I think, and we were all ensigns. But now, what did you ask me?
Revelos	I was just wondering what the gender relations were like. Whether it be with the enlisted men there or the officers that were above you in the chain of command. Did they accept the Wave officers? Was there tension?
G. Parker	--Oh yes, they were delighted because there were a lot of men officers, including my husband. He was just a lieutenant at the time. The only time we saw them, mainly, was at dinner. We all went to dinner. Because we all ate in the BOQ, so we would see them and after dinner, we would play cards or play ping pong, or something like that. So, that's how I kind of got to know him, yeah.





R. Parker	How about at work? Did you interface with the men at work very often?
G. Parker	Oh yeah. A lot! Because, well, they were the only people there, we had to work with them. I was kind of a—I thought I was sent there because of my math ability.
Revelos	You probably were!—
G. Parker	I majored in math. But I don't think that was true because I don't know if I wasn't what they expected or something, but then I became an office—what they call an office manager for a... I think it was a captain. Two captains had this office, and I was their manager. Didn't do much, just filed and made appointments and stuff like that for them.
Revelos	So did you do the range tables at one assignment and then you got moved to another assignment at Dahlgren?
G. Parker	Yes. When I first went there I was working on the range tables, and then, as I say, I don't know if I wasn't good enough, or these captains needed a secretary or something like that, then they moved me.
Revelos	They probably—well I also know that exactly 1945 they started developing computers to handle some of those calculations to start automating some of the gunnery process.
G. Parker	Well, we got the adding machines anyway!
Revelos	Something like that! So, what was an average day like on the range in 1945 at Dahlgren? Walk me through an average day.
G. Parker	Oh, I have no idea. Well, then I went to an office. And... What did I do? Well, these men, I guess they were lieutenants in the office, they were the ones that were out there on the firing range. And we had information on the 3" guns, the 5, the 10, the 12, the 16, and they were out there actually on the range firing the guns to test them. So then they would bring the results, whatever they were, and I would work out these range tables. I can't remember. I'm so old; I kind of lost my memory!
Revelos	Certainly doesn't seem that way!
G. Parker	Oh, I have.





Revelos	It's very interesting so far.
G. Parker	I've forgotten a lot, but that was about what we did.
R. Parker	And did you have to use a slide rule, Mom?
G. Parker	You know they didn't even have—they certainly had slide rules in those days. I didn't. No, I didn't have a slide rule. I guess I had an adding machine by this time, but they didn't have much help. No. We had just formulas, and we had to work them out by hand.
Revelos	Was it difficult for you to learn the formulas? Or did your background in mathematics—was it easy?
G. Parker	Oh yeah, right. It wasn't too difficult. But we had to make charts. This is for—and, well I told you, figure the temperature, the angle of the gun, and what else?
R. Parker	Wind?
G. Parker	The weight of the projectile, and yeah put that all into a formula. And then one degree, then two, then three, then four, like that. That's how primitive it was.
Revelos	Did you ever get to visit the gun line while it was in action and firing?
G. Parker	Oh yeah, they saw that all the women got out there to watch them fire the guns. It was neat! Because they said they fired down the Potomac River, and you could actually see the projectile if you stood right straight behind it, you could see it going along through the air.
Revelos	Wow, that's pretty fascinating. Did they ever let you shoot the gun? Did you ever get to pull the--?
G. Parker	No, never did. My husband, he was out there shooting. Dropping bombs is what they did mainly, drop bombs. But they had guns, too; they'd fire guns, too. That was a whole different thing of course. He was in the Aviation Department.
R. Parker	Were you ever there when Dad flew under the bridge?
G. Parker	[Laughs]
Revelos	He was the guy who flew under the bridge? We've heard about that!





G. Parker	Yeah, that was my husband!
R. Parker	Yeah, I guess that was a little bit of routine.
C. Parker	That was the legend, anyway!
Revelos	Yeah, that legend still survives to this day.
G. Parker	Is that right? Yeah, he was the first one to fly under—
C. Parker	He never got caught.
Revelos	Well, the current captain of the base is an aviator, so he's pretty keen to collect all the different bits of aviation history.
G. Parker	So I guess he would like to know that.
Revelos	Yes, he would.
C. Parker	Did they ever fire them at night? Did they ever fire these guns at night?
G. Parker	I'm sure they did.
R. Parker	I wouldn't think there'd be much point in it.
C. Parker	Well I guess you'd be able to see them coming out because they were red hot when they came out.
Revelos	Some of the testing—do you remember the different types of testing that they did? Because I know that they shot into the river, but they also shot into steel plates.
G. Parker	Oh yes! They did. The armor plates. Oh, that was a whole big division. They were testing the armor plates. They tested like 3" plates, 6" plates, 12" plates. They had these big iron plates that they—yeah. You're right; they tested plates.
Revelos	Did ever have any accidents? I've heard in those days that sometimes when they were proof testing these guns, the breech would fail and that they were occasionally accidents, but not very often. Did you witness anything like that?
G. Parker	No, now that you mention it. I think that there had been an accident just before I got there, so I didn't hear too much about it, but I think, yeah, a couple of people had gotten killed. And I don't know of the details about the accident,





	but I remember hearing about it.
Revelos	Now what about the war effort, as part of the entire war effort, were you guys getting news about the war?
G. Parker	Eh, pretty much. Oh I'll tell you what. One of my jobs was selling war bonds. You know in those days they had war bonds? Everybody bought it. I finally got the people to sign up that they would have a bond. Like a \$25 bond, I think, was \$18, or something like that, and you figure if you kept it for ten years, you could sell it for \$25 back. I was in charge of that—selling the bonds.
R. Parker	Who'd you sell them to?
G. Parker	I used to go in the mornings singing this song <i>Any bonds today? You could dum de dum</i> [forgot the words] <i>in the USA. Take up the dum dah dum you got to—</i> oh I can't remember— <i>How about buying some bonds today.</i>
Revelos	That's pretty good!
G. Parker	And everybody would say, "Get outta here!"
C. Parker	She'd go down to Colonial Beach and sit outside the bar and sell them.
Revelos	There ya go.
G. Parker	What'd you say?
C. Parker	You'd go down to Colonial Beach and sell them outside the bar.
R. Parker	You'd sit on the boardwalk in your swimming suit and sell bonds.
G. Parker	[<i>Laughing</i>] Yeah right! Not quite.
Revelos	So, that was a collateral duty for you?
G. Parker	I guess it was. I can't remember how it started. But I was selling war bonds! Sold a lot!
Revelos	Now, did they ever bring in any entertainment for you guys? Did you ever have a visit by the USO or anything like that while you were there?
G. Parker	Not that I remember.
Revelos	So, it was all business.





G. Parker	It was pretty much business. We had a kind of a movie house where we went to the movies. They had a movie every weekend, but, no, I can't remember any other kind of entertainment. Isn't that funny?
Revelos	There's still a—that movie house is still in operation.
G. Parker	Is it?
Revelos	Yes ma'am.
G. Parker	[Laughs]
Revelos	Still standing, still do ceremonies in there and have movies all the time.
G. Parker	Just an old wooden building? It's been rebuilt, I'm sure.
Revelos	Maybe it has been rebuilt. This was in base housing, not all the way to the Administration Building, but in that area there was a building that still plays movies.
G. Parker	Well, is that BOQ still there?
Revelos	No, ma'am.
G. Parker	It was not far from the movie house, to tell you the truth. It was on that same street.
Revelos	I think the BOQ and stuff has been moved.
G. Parker	It has? I imagine it has. We drove through there once. Were you [Rod] with me?
R. Parker	No, I never went there.
G. Parker	We drove through there once. Must've been one of you all!
C. Parker	Seems like it was, maybe.
G. Parker	I don't know. Anyways, it's changed.
Revelos	Well, a lot of it, though, is still the same. Some of the housing is still there. The captain's house or the admiral's house—





G. Parker	Oh yes!
Revelos	--Which was a scandal, apparently, in the '20s, when Congress found out they built this big captain's house right next to the creek.
G. Parker	Yeah, it was near the creek.
Revelos	Were there any other amenities on base beside the movie theater? Did they have golf or baseball diamonds?
G. Parker	We had golf because I used to do that with my husband, too. I had an early dinner, then we'd go out and play golf—a group of us. And that's the only time I really played golf—well, we played after that, too. I just liked it, so we'd go out and play golf.
Revelos	Now, when did you resign your commission? When was that? Was that at your next duty station? Or did you move along with your husband somewhere and stay in the service?
G. Parker	Well, you know, in those days, if you got married, you had to get out.
Revelos	Really?
G. Parker	Yeah. They changed just about the time—I think I just did catch it. Because he wanted me to get out because we were getting married and he was going to San Diego, you know, to pick up a squadron. So, he wanted me to come with him. And of course I couldn't—and then they found out—and so I had everybody working on it, even the head of the WAVES in Washington. "How're we going to get you out of here?" So, they did. They found that if you got in by a certain date, you could resign. They changed that within a month, I think, so I just did catch that. So, I was able to get out then and go to—
Revelos	So, you came to Dahlgren, and you spent your year in Dahlgren. What was the most challenging part of your job, of your work while you were there, do you think?
G. Parker	Oh, I have no idea. I didn't work very hard. <i>[Laughs]</i> I worked for these two captains. Well, I don't know. There were a bunch of lieutenants there who were doing the testing, who were testing guns and ammunition out on the range, so I kind of—they bring in the information and I would enter it into the book, say about the 12" guns or something like that. That was about it, I guess, that I can recall.
R. Parker	What'd they do with your end product? You did all these mathematical





	calculations, and then what happened to it?
G. Parker	Well, I just put it—I had a—they had gotten a big filing cabinet, and each gun was listed separately. And I just put it in the proper place, and that’s all I did.
Revelos	Did you ever get any feedback from the fleet about some of the operations that were ongoing? Did they ever say, “Hey, something doesn’t work. Fix it”?
G. Parker	[Laughs] No, not me. I didn’t. I was just a lowly little secretary-type thing. But I’m sure the men in the office did. They were all lieutenants, I think.
Revelos	And if you had to decide what the most rewarding thing about Dahlgren was, other than, I assume, meeting your husband, what did you enjoy most about working at Dahlgren?
G. Parker	Oh, I thought that was the best year of my life! Because they really—I was only the second Wave officer to arrive. Oh, and they thought we were—Phew! We were made a lot over—and we got invited to all the parties, the captain’s parties, and everybody was ready to entertain the WAVES! So, that was fun. Of course, I met my husband.
R. Parker	Wasn’t much change from Wisconsin though, was it?
G. Parker	Ha ha. It was a change for me! As I say, all the cocktail—people were big on cocktail parties in those days, you know. Before dinner you had maybe an hour or so when you went to a cocktail party and you had a drink, and then you went to dinner. So, that’s what we did. And especially in the Navy, they were very socially-inclined. So yeah, we went to all the cocktail parties and were made a lot over, I’ll say that, the Wave officers.
Revelos	Was it a big adjustment then, coming from Wisconsin? Whereabouts in Wisconsin are you from?
G. Parker	The southwest corner. Did you ever hear of La Crosse?
Revelos	Yes, ma’am.
G. Parker	Well, just south of La Crosse. And Madison! It was west of Madison.
C. Parker	Ever heard of Platteville?
Revelos	Platteville I hadn’t heard of.
G. Parker	No, Platteville that was the school I went to. It was a teachers’ college. That’s





	where I to school. And Dubuque. I went to school at the University of Dubuque for a couple years. You don't have to put that down.
Revelos	Oh, we want to learn everything about you!
G. Parker	Genevieve Parker: Oh no! No, no, no, no.
Revelos	So you're time, though, in the Navy after Dahlgren, that continued on for some years with your husband. Where were some of the places that you were stationed?
G. Parker	Oh boy. You know, he never went overseas after we were married. He spent a lot of time overseas before, but after we were married—see he was a... What'd you call him?
R. Parker	Well, he went—he was—
C. Parker	--He was in the reserve—
R. Parker	--Navy when I was a squadron XO. And he did go to sea. That was after you—
G. Parker	Oh yes. Yes, yes. He was a—
R. Parker	--And then World War II ended. And so then, when he came home... But he was a long time coming home! He didn't come home in August when the war ended. He didn't come home until—
G. Parker	--No, he was out in the Pacific at that time, so they had to bring the ship back and all that kind of stuff. And we were married, so I went—and you [Rod] were born, so my mother kept Rod. And I went out. No flying then. I took a train out to San Francisco, met my husband; he was coming home from overseas [START PART 2] so I met him, and then we drove back to Wisconsin, picked up Rod and came out here.
G. Parker	--So he was crying, and my husband couldn't stand that, so he stopped the car and says, "Let's put him out here." <i>[Laughs]</i>
Revelos	Now, do you remember any of the civilian scientists or anything that worked along the range?
G. Parker	That had gotten into—Well, I remember Allan Hershey really well. He married one of my friends. And you talk about a real weirdo! <i>[Laughs]</i> He was. But he was a typical scientist professor, and—well, he was ok. And I had this friend, who was a Wave officer, who was a little bit strange, too. But she was a lot of





	fun, but she was determined she was going to get a husband. And she did! [Laughs]
Revelos	She met one of the scientists?
G. Parker	She married one of the scientists. And it was a good match.
C. Parker	And they lived down there—
G. Parker	--You know they—
C. Parker	They stayed in Dahlgren.
G. Parker	And they stayed in Dahlgren because he was working there. So they both got out of the Navy, but they both—they worked at Dahlgren.
Revelos	And this is Allan Hershey?
G. Parker	Allan Hershey, yeah.
Revelos	Now, do you remember L. T. E. Thompson? He would've been kind of the lead civilian scientist. Did you ever have any encounters with him?
G. Parker	Thompson. No, I don't remember that name at all.
Revelos	Lyddane? Chuck Lyddane. Does that name sound familiar at all?
G. Parker	No. They must've come after my time. Because I left in '44.
C. Parker	I remember Daddy telling a story that he was out in San Diego getting ready to go out on the ship, and he said he sat down at the Officers' Club to have breakfast, and one of these PhDs came in. And so, he was talking to him, and he said, "What're you doing out here?" And he says, "I can't tell you. You'll know soon." So, apparently he was working on the atomic bomb.
G. Parker	Oh yes, that's right. They were working on the—
R. Parker	Well, they used the Norden bombsight when they dropped it, so that might've been part of what they were doing.
G. Parker	Yeah, that was my husband working on the Norden bombsight.





Revelos	Zeke Parsons? ¹ Was he around base when you were there?
G. Parker	No, but I know the name. Must've been—I don't know if it was before or after. I'm familiar with his name, but I didn't know him.
Revelos	He was the commander at Dahlgren—or he wasn't the commander, but he was maybe in charge of some of the test operations. And he ended up being the bomb commander on the Enola Gay that lined up the sights of the drop. He was friends with Robert Oppenheimer, and extremely big name---one of the few officers that had a hard science background before he came in the Navy, so he was a very good fit for Dahlgren for the work they were doing.
R. Parker	I didn't know there were any Navy guys working on the Enola Gay. I thought they were all Army Air Corps guys.
Revelos	Zeke Parsons ended up becoming an admiral. He supposedly passed away right about the same time Robert Oppenheimer got charged by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and he supposedly was so shocked, I think he just had a heart attack. They also did—I don't know if you were there on base for this, but out there in Machodoc Creek, they did underwater detonations.
Revelos	Do you remember anything about those?
G. Parker	No. It wasn't during my time, but I have heard of it.
Revelos	Other than the watermen that worked the range boats, collecting the dead fish for dinner, we actually learned that those were scale testing for the Bikini Test. They wanted to see what conventional explosives would do in the water to try and scale and estimate what an atomic blast would look like. So, I didn't know if you were there for that. It was right around your time. Maybe a little bit after you left.
G. Parker	Oh, I think quite a bit. The atomic bomb was after I left. Well after I left.
Revelos	So, was there anything other than gun testing going on in those days? Were there any other devices that you remember being tested?
G. Parker	Well, the bombsights was what my husband was working on. The bombsights. So, he said they were working on testing these bombsights. They were dropping bombs all over the place trying to improve these bombsights!

¹ Error: Andy intends to say Deak/Deke Parsons.





Revelos	How did you deal with the noise? Because everything I hear nowadays, they still shoot the 5". They play a siren, and it's not nearly as loud as what the old guns were like.
G. Parker	Oh yes. It shook the building, and all your pictures were crooked. It shook everything. When they tested those 16" guns, everything shook.
Revelos	Did it take a while to get used to the noise and the hustle and bustle of the range and all those activities?
G. Parker	Well, the noise, I guess. That's about it of course. Well, where I was opposite was—well, it was pretty close to the range.
R. Parker	You just got used to it after a while.
G. Parker	You got used to it after a while.
Revelos	I hear stories of folks that lived on the base in the '50s and '60s, and at that time they had a whistle that would sound off, and then they would shoot the 16". So, visitors aboard the base would hear the whistle, and say, "What is that?" and then three seconds later they'd drop to the floor when this concussion echoed across the base.
R. Parker	I guess they probably thought that someone had dropped the bomb on them!
Revelos	Was there anything else that you can remember about your time at Dahlgren that I haven't asked or haven't covered?
G. Parker	I haven't thought about it for so long. Once I got up here on the farm, and started having my children, I was kind of far removed from Dahlgren. I did have this one friend who was also a Wave, and as I say, she married this guy. And they lived on the base. He still kept his position, and so they lived—and so we used to go back down once in a while to visit them. But no, I can't remember any of the interesting activities.
Revelos	Did you ever have any contact with some of the adding machines? Or the computers that were just starting to—
G. Parker	--Just starting. In fact, the computer, just a simple computer, filled a whole room. And they had this big room, and I was just about getting ready to leave when they got this computer in, and oh my gosh. All the bigwigs, they were so excited about this computer, and they'd all come and look it over and stuff like that. Can you believe that? Filled a whole room! Now it's this [<i>puts up her hands approximately 1ft x 1ft</i>] big!





Revelos	Did you ever get to work with that? Or did you know anybody that worked on those early computers?
G. Parker	Oh, I'm sure I knew them, but I was about getting ready to leave at that time, and we got married... So, I didn't, no, but I knew them—I didn't realize what—I saw the computers but that's about all. That was just amazing. I had forgotten about that.
C. Parker	Mother, you told me one of your jobs was to go down to Colonial Beach on Friday night or Saturday night and bring all the WAVES home.
G. Parker	[Laughs] We did! We had to watch out for the WAVES and be sure they didn't get into any trouble. We had to walk up and down that boardwalk and watch the WAVES—enlisted WAVES.
Revelos	Did they ever give you any problems? Or any of the men give you any problems when you did that?
G. Parker	No, no. I don't think so. They were just like us, and probably some of them were just as well-educated. In fact, my sister was an enlisted Wave. And they weren't any different, except that we had the stripes.
Revelos	Did you have a good rapport with the enlisted WAVES? Was it a pretty good relationship with the officers and the enlisted? Or was there tension?—there's always problems—
G. Parker	--No, there wasn't any tension, but we didn't associate with them. In fact, they had a BOQ that was... I don't know, it might have been in the same building that the sailors were in, or close to it anyway, and we were in another building—officers' building. There was definitely a separation between—
Revelos	--Was it a house kind of that they kept the Wave officers in?
G. Parker	Yeah, we lived in just a regular house. Because there were only about... Oh, I was only like number three. And then there came—got two more, then there were five. And there weren't too many Wave officers, maybe ten, twelve. But there were a lot of enlisted WAVES. No, we didn't associate with them hardly at all.
Revelos	And that's military tradition to this day.
G. Parker	Is it?





Revelos	Oh, sure. I mean, there has to be some separation.
G. Parker	They don't associate with the enlisted. You can be friends, but you don't go around with them.
R. Parker	You don't socialize with them.
G. Parker	No, we don't socialize.
Revelos	Now, did the house that you stayed in with the other WAVES—was that in base housing? Was that near the admiral's house? Or do you remember where that was on base?
G. Parker	Uh, it wasn't far, but no, it was a regular house. Somebody had—no! When we first went, I think it had been a BOQ for the men. And it was just a long building with rooms, and we each had a room, then we just walked across the street to the "mess hall," so to speak. And the men had a BOQ, too, but they weren't connected.
Revelos	Was the food good?
G. Parker	[<i>Shrugs</i>] Well, as I recall, it was good.
Revelos	As good as Navy chow goes, not so bad?
G. Parker	Yeah, it was good! And we had—in those days, they had Filipino cooks. And... what were their names... Tommy and... Freddy and Tommy, or something like that. We had two Filipino men that did the cooking for the BOQ, and yeah, the food was good.
Revelos	Nowadays, they just have one mess hall for officers and enlisted.
G. Parker	They do?
Revelos	I mean, there's a separate area for officers.
G. Parker	Oh really?
Revelos	Was it the same facility then? Or were there two separate facilities for officers and enlisted?
G. Parker	I think they were two separate facilities. This was just the officers, as I remember. The Officers' Club, you know? And they had a game room, where you could play ping pong or cards or something like that, and then they had





	another big living room like this where you could go and play music or whatever you did. That's where we kind of got together, socialized with the men officers.
Revelos	Now, did you ever have to travel around for work? Did you ever work with Indian Head or have any contact with any of that work?
G. Parker	Never. No, I just worked in that one office.
Revelos	Strictly Dahlgren. And you went to Fredericksburg or Colonial Beach on the weekends as time allowed.
G. Parker	Well, by this time—it was Fredericksburg. And by this time, I was dating my husband, so he had a car. So, sometimes we'd come up here to—his parents lived here—or go into Washington for dates. Or Fredericksburg.
Revelos	Was it easy to get to Fredericksburg? I've heard that sometimes the roads weren't always that good.
G. Parker	Is that right?
Revelos	Peppermill Hill. I've heard of people getting stuck on Peppermill Hill.
G. Parker	Is that right?
Revelos	On Dahlgren Road, trying to go to Fredericksburg. I don't know if you ever had any memories like that. Maybe your husband had a better car than they did!
G. Parker	[Laughs] Well, maybe he did!
Beth	But the bridge on the river had been built by that time, right?
R. Parker	Yeah, the bridge was there.
Beth	The ferry had been done.
G. Parker	Oh, yes. The bridge was pretty new though. Yeah, the bridge was new, that bridge across the Potomac.
Revelos	It's been a lot of fun talking with you!
G. Parker	Yes! It's been fun.
Conclusion	Thank you for listening to this week's Dahlgren Centennial Podcast, and hopefully you have learned another interesting aspect of what our people





	<p>accomplish for the Navy and for our nation.</p> <p>We will continue sharing how Dahlgren is a one-of-a-kind location where innovation is heralded as the hallmark of each individual.</p> <p><u>PAUSE</u></p> <p>Tune in next week to hear from Ann Swope, whose career at Dahlgren started in 1981. Ms. Swope began her career as the Environmental Manager and rose to be Chief of Staff. We'll also hear a little bit about her entry into a male-dominated field.</p> <p>Thank you for celebrating this century of innovation with us at Dahlgren.</p> <p><u>MUSIC</u></p>
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