



Ann Swope
1981- Present
**Safety and Environmental Director/
 NSWCDD Chief of Status**

<p>Introduction</p>	<p><u>MUSIC</u></p> <p>Hello and 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 Ann Swope, who started at Dahlgren in 1981 and still works here today. Ms. Swope started her government 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>Let’s listen to Ann Swope</p>
<p>Ann Swope</p>	<p>I actually came to Dahlgren in September of 1981 as a graduate co-op student and I heard about it because I got married in August of 81 and my fiancé, husband, whatever at the time grew up in Colonial Beach in the area. This was the biggest employer around. I actually did a phone interview with a man name Edilyn Jinsky and I was sitting in the personnel office doing a phone interview with him to come in as a graduate co-op and didn’t realize that he sat at White Oak, Maryland, so my boss when they hired me sat at White Oak and I was here at Dahlgren. It was interesting.</p> <p>Environmental Toxicology was my masters that I was working on at the time and it just so happened that I came in right when all the Environmental Regulations began to hit. So it was perfect timing. Hazardous waste laws called the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) had just been enacted and enforced in 1980, so it was perfect timing I guess in that realm and that’s what he needed work on and I said sure I’d be happy to do it. Didn’t know anything about it but dove right in.</p> <p>Probably Environmental Manager was my title at the time. I essentially was reading those new regulations and trying to figure out how to manage all the</p>





environmental programs we had on base including hazardous waste, which was the big new law that went into effect. You were no longer allowed to use your landfills on base to get rid of waste. All the laws on how to store it, transport it, ship it, inspect places you shipped it to.

Love Canal. Look it up online. It was very interesting to find out what happened at Love Canal. Just to give you a little history, it was in New York. It was a company that buried all sorts of drums and waste material in a big ravine and then eventually sold the property to that local community to build a school on. Everybody starting getting sick because all those drums leaked into the water way. So Love Canal is what started all the environmental regs. That happened in the 70s and the regs were written in '76 and implemented in '80 to start cradle to grave management of bad chemicals, so that's why now you put everything into a lined landfill or incinerate it with controls. It was a whole different world of regulation for everybody.

And then I expanded from environmental to environmental and safety and then added explosive safety to just until last year (2010). I was the Safety and Environmental Director for NSWC which included all the environmental programs, safety programs and explosive safety. Now I'm Chief of Staff, came over a year ago, as Chief of Staff which is actually traditional a military billet but military billets are hard to come by now with downsizing so that Captain at the time, CAPT Sheila Patterson, decided to make it a civilian billet and that's when I came over.

[When I started at NSWCDD], I actually came to work in a building that had no females in it. No female restroom or nothing, so when I came in they put a flip sign on the door of the restroom and I used it once and from then on went across the street to a building that had a female restroom. *[Laughs]* It was the public works department. W was the code.

I grew up in a family of three brothers and I had three sons so it never really bothered me [being the only female in the building]. The people here are great especially in public works. It's one big family. I went through three pregnancies like that and I was in a building with all males and I was two weeks late and came to work every day and they were all like oh my goodness, what are you doing here again, don't have the baby here kind of deal but they were very kind and generous and they knew my husband so that helped I guess.

I did some travel, but not a whole lot. Probably three or four times a year, I would have to go on travel. Getting the workforce to understand the technicalities and the responsibilities they have as all the new laws keep coming out. In the environmental and safety world, it only keeps getting tougher and more and more regulations thrown on you and part of my success early on was





	<p>that there was a lot of training that had to be done, so I became a trainer and became a well-known trainer within the Navy. Not only did I train people at Dahlgren, but I trained people at PAX River, NOSA, Indian Head in a lot of those regulations, so if you're going to train you know it really well, so I didn't have any problem. I was well respected I guess in my field in what I did. I never felt that was ever an issue, I don't think I would have taken it as an issue for being female. I would have taken it as an issue in the change of how they do business and why do I have to do that now kind of thing.</p> <p>I will just give you one little story that stuck in my mind. In the early 80s, we had all of our outside inspections come down from the Navy Yard and there was one real tough woman there who had a reputation for being hard-nosed and we were looking at different areas where people were doing their activities and I said yes sir to somebody. I was 21 years old and the man was probably 50 and that is the type of respect you give when there is that much of an age difference and she got out and looked at me and said "Don't say yes sir to them. They've got to respect you bla bla bla and I was like I'm not changing who I am for any reputation. She thoughts she had to do that and she was probably 30 years older than me, so when she came along I guess she thought she needed to be that way to get respect.</p> <p>It's who you are. It's how you are wired. There is not as many females that go into engineering. They certainly go into science but not as many go into engineering. I think if you look across the board you would see more women in science than in engineering. You certainly don't see as many women in management here as you do in the workforce. I think part of it's the field and I think part of it too if you are choosing someone to manage an organization than you are looking for some body you can get along with and sees things the way you see it. And maybe if that tweeks you a little bit to stick with those like you as in males pick males and females pick females I don't know. And you do have a lot of oh I just couldn't work for a woman. I think if you went back and talked to people who worked for me, I don't think you'd see oh my goodness I couldn't. And I'm not sure what I attribute that to. I'm also a third kid so I'm pretty laid back. I'm hard-nosed when it comes to making sure people are safe in what they do. If it's going to land somebody in jail then they have to do it right kind of deal because a lot of those regulations are that way but I'm not pushy. I listen to all sides of things so I don't know. I've been around a long time too. People either know me or they know somebody that knows me that probably helps. I've not had any negative experiences whatsoever. I'm lucky. It's been a great place to work.</p>
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 Charles Roble, an engineer at Dahlgren from 1941 to 1967. Roble started on base as a battery attendant but eventually joined the professional staff and retired a supervising electronics engineer.</p> <p>Thank you for celebrating this century of innovation with us at Dahlgren.</p> <p><u>MUSIC</u></p>
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