Lieutenant Candyce S. Henry, USNR

One of the First Female Line Officers Serving in the Navy, 1973-1978

Although women have been in the Navy since 1908 when the Nurse Corps was established, the first female service personnel did not enter the Navy until 1917 when the Bureau of Navigation, which was responsible for personnel, authorized the commandants of naval districts to enlist women as yeomen, radio electricians, and other useful ratings. The activities and responsibilities of these women volunteers were greatly limited and none served at sea. When I graduated from college in the summer of 1973 there were more than 73,000 officers in the U. S. Navy. But of these, only a little over one percent (about 1,000) were women not serving as nurses. At that time, I was unaware of the dramatic changes taking place with regard to the role of women in the U. S. Navy, even though I had just enlisted and was headed to the Navy’s Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Newport, Rhode Island.

These changes came about largely as the result of the enlightened personal priorities established by established by Admiral Elmo R., Jr., after he became CNO in June 1970. Reforms in the Navy’s personnel policies, he believed, were urgently needed if the Navy’s alarming low retention rates were to be raised, and if, in view of the approaching end of the draft, the Navy would be able to recruit enough young men and women to serve even one hitch.”[[1]](#endnote-1) To articulate his position on the changes he planned to make, Zumwalt issued a series of messages from the CNO to the entire Navy on policy, which were given the moniker “Z-grams.”

As part of a larger effort to update personnel policies, he convened two groups of women in 1971 to investigate the utilization of female talent in the Navy. “Upon hearing the results of their deliberations, Zumwalt was ‘sadly enlightened’ to learn that for various reasons the Navy had wasted much of its women’s talents.”[[2]](#endnote-2) Zumwalt addressed these concerns on August 7, 1972, when he issued Z-gram #116 on the “Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women in the Navy.”[[3]](#endnote-3) The measure was designed to give women that greater opportunity and thus improve the retention at a time when the Navy was moving to an all-volunteer force with the abolition of the draft. Z-116 informed all hands efforts would be made to “eliminate any disadvantage to women resulting from either legal or attitudinal restrictions.”

As part of the message contained CNO’s Z-gram on equal rights for women, Admiral Zumwalt expressed the desire to increase the opportunity for the professional growth of women in the Navy by eliminating the pattern of assigning females exclusively to certain billets and equalizing the selection criteria for naval training by opening all of the Navy’s training programs to women. The later missive had a marked influence on my service in the Navy for it opened the door to my training as an unrestricted line officer when women were integrated into the OCS school for the first time in 1973.

**The Decision to Join the Navy**

The idea of going into the Navy started to percolate in my brain during my freshman year at the University of Arizona. The girl who lived across the hall from my roommate and I was in her last year of college and had decided to go into the Navy. I always had a thing about serving and giving back and discussions with her got me interested in entering the military after I graduated.

My father had served in the Navy during World War Two and my brother had volunteered to serve in the Army during the Vietnam War. I was very patriotic, and although he wasn’t sent to Vietnam, I felt it was important to support the troops and would write letters to names and addresses provided by the Army telling the soldiers how much I appreciated their service and bravery. I was very aware of the protests taking place against the war, and while we lived in a free country where everyone had a right to agree or disagree with the government’s policy, I didn’t think it was right for civilians to be spitting on people in uniform. I was so incensed by what I saw on television that I sent a letter to the editor of the Arizona Republic extolling importance of patriotism and why we needed to support our troops. It was OK to protest the war, I wrote, but you still needed to encourage and respect the men and women serving our country. I’m still very proud of that letter, which was published as the lead item on the editorial page in the Arizona Republic.

I always wanted to go on to graduate school, but didn’t have the money to continue my education after my stipend for being the child of a disabled veteran ended once I graduated from college. Going into the military, I thought, might be a good way to gain management and leadership experience while obtaining financial support to continue my education in graduate school. I also wanted to travel outside the United States, but didn’t have the money, so during my senior year I began looking into the various services.

I wrote for information, talked to various recruiters, and did research in the library. When I looked at the qualifications listed for each of the services, things such as education level, I found that the Navy and the Air Force had the highest educational and intellectual standards. I knew I was pretty smart and so I thought I would rather be around the brighter people and the jobs were more technical. So, I narrowed it down to the Air Force and the Navy and then I looked to see where the bases were, and the Air Force bases were in the middle of nowhere, and the Navy bases are mostly in ports. And I’m a big city girl, so that sealed the deal.

In May, I went down to the local Navy recruiting office filled out the paper work to apply to join the Navy, passed a physical examination, and was given an IQ test, which I passed with flying colors. I was accepted as an officer candidate, contingent upon my graduation from college and told to report back after I had secured my degree at the end of the summer. To prepare myself for the physical rigors of Office Candidate School—as the Navy’s literature suggested—I began working out with some weights at home to increase my physical strength and began running around the neighborhood to improve my stamina. The retirees loved to talk, and I soon had to change my running route to avoid them.

**Officer Candidate School**

I hadn’t discussed my plans to enter the Navy with my family before I enlisted. I only told them after I returned from the recruiting office with orders in hand to report to the Officer Candidate Indoctrination School at Newport. My parents weren’t particularly thrilled to find out that I was going into the Navy. My dad was so stunned and shocked by the news that he just sat there like he was in a catatonic state. He was not in favor of his daughter going into the Navy. Both of my parents had been very protective of me while I was growing up and now I was leaving them. Naturally they were upset, but they soon got over it.

I knew from high school on that if I could overcome my fear of the unknown, of trying something new, and of leaving home and going far away; I could do a lot of things and a lot of opportunities would open up for me. So while I was uneasy and a little nervous about what the immediate future held for me, I was anxious to begin my career in the Navy. I didn’t have long to wait. Three and a half weeks later, on Saturday, September 15, 1973, I was on a plane headed for the T. F. Green Airport serving Providence, Rhode Island, the commercial airport nearest the United States Naval base at Newport, which was home to the Officer Training Command and the school for officer candidates.

When I arrived at the base, I was directed to Callihan Hall. After signing in with the proper authorities, I was given a packet of materials and escorted to the Nimitz Building, which served as the barracks for the OCS students, and shown to my assigned room in the dormitory wing of the women’s section. The packet contained the rule and regulations that we were expected to follow as well as a detailed schedule of the next seven days, which served as an orientation period prior to the start of classes.

I don’t remember what happened next, but it’s likely that I met some of my fellow students and I went over to the mess hall for dinner, before retiring for the night. The next morning, probably assembled in the grassy area in front of the main entrance to Callaghan Hall where we were introduced to the instructor in charge of our company, Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) Carl Klokee. Warrant officers are higher in rank than enlisted personnel but are lower than commissioned officers. They are also leaders and are expected to live up to the reputation of a commissioned officer.

 Klokee, as typical of most CWOs, was a walking store of information who would provide us with expert guidance during our tenure at the Navy’s Officer Candidate School. He spent the rest of the day showing us around the base, explaining the rules and regulations and what was expected of us and what we could expect in return. He told us what would happen if we failed to do certain things, what the results would be, and the things you were not allowed to do, when we had to get up, when we had to line up in the morning, and when lights were to be out. He went out of his way to make sure that we understood the rules and regulations regarding the access to the men’s side of the dormitory—as I recall there were two wings for the women and four for the men—and the prohibition of fraternizing with our male classmates. Ours was only the second OCS class to be integrated with the men’s and I guess they wanted to make sure that there were no extracurricular activities going on. He also gave us a blow-by-blow account of the week’s schedule as well as what would follow after we finished with orientation.

On Monday, we formed up as a company (our introduction to close order drill began the day before) and marched to the hospital where we suffered through another physical exam and were given a series of shots. The rest of the day according to one student (my memory fails me on the exact details) were spent getting “clothes, haircuts, processing papers, walking our legs off and getting our books (36 of them).”[[4]](#endnote-4) That took up most of the day. At the end of the day, Warrant Officer Klokee told us to read the Student Regulations and memorize 70 International Code Flag cards. Knowing what was in the regulations was important, but memorizing the code flags was very monotonous.

In the days that followed we had to pass both a physical fitness test and a swimming test. The OCS literature that I had received prior to my enlistment had clearly stated that the level of strength and stamina necessary to successfully complete Officer Candidate School was similar to the level required in cross-training fitness programs. The material urged potential candidates to report to OCS in good physical condition. Taking heed of this advice, I began a training regiment six or eight weeks ahead of time. I went to a gym several days a week to build up my arm strength and jogged around the neighborhood to build up my stamina. By the time I reached Newport, I was in pretty good shape. Needless to say, I had no trouble passing the physical fitness test.

Like all personnel entering the Navy, we were required to successfully complete the Navy’s swim qualification test. Today the test is divided into four parts: first you have to jump from a ten-foot-high platform, which is supposed to mirrored the abandon ship scenario. Once in the water you then have to demonstrate the ability to float for five minutes, upon completion of the five-minute float, then you have to swim 50 yards; after which you are given a set of coveralls to wear for coverall inflating drill where you had to force air into it so that it provides extra buoyancy to help keep you afloat.

I had never jumped off of a 10-foot platform before, so it was a little scary, but it didn’t faze me in the least because I knew that they wouldn’t let me drown. The rest of the swim test was pretty easy for me, albeit I don’t remember anything about the coverall inflation drill. Maybe that part of the test didn’t exist when I took it in the fall of 1973. The Navy claims that the swim test “is designed to instill confidence in every officer who completes assimilation training.” [[5]](#endnote-5) Maybe for some candidates, but not me. There were lots of swimming pools where I grew up in Phoenix and my parents made me take swimming lessons every summer. I was a pretty good swimmer by the time I entered OCS, so jumping off the ten-foot platform wasn’t intimidating in the least. The swim test wasn’t very much of a challenge either, although I do remember that the water was a lot colder than the water in the swimming pools in Arizona.

Sometime during that first week we were issued uniforms. As before, I can’t remember which day it was or exactly when it took place, but I definitely remember what we were expected to wear. After all, I wore the same clothes every day for the next four and a half months. We were given really starchy white shirts, navy blue colored A-line skirts, navy blue sweaters, and black leather “granny” shoes that laced up the front, and a blue campaign style cap, that was called a cover in Navy parlance. We must have been issued blue shorts and white t-shirts, and sneakers for physical fitness activities, commonly called “PT,” although this too is lost to my memory. But I do recall being issued and wearing khaki-colored trousers for use when we were assigned to the YP training boats. This must have happened later, as we were not assigned the boats until the next phase of our training. Once you were in uniform everybody looked like everybody else—no individual choice available—which of course is one of the purposes of being in uniform along with camaraderie, instilling discipline and esprit de corps.

And then there was our introduction to close-order drill, an activity that is supposed to instill discipline, confidence, and teamwork. We did a lot of marching that first week, starting with how to stand at attention, which requires the individual to remain perfectly still, to be fully alert, and to be entirely silent. Standing at attention is the first step in learning to take and accept orders, for it requires “the subordination of the will of the individual to that of his superior.”[[6]](#endnote-6) The marching commands—right turn, left turn, halt, forward march, etc., quickly followed.

I understood the reasons for marching and was compliant, because it was part of the military indoctrination. So, I just marched. You want me to march, I thought to myself, OK, then I’ll march. So, there I was marching along, I couldn’t talk, but that was all right. I didn’t care one way or another.

The first week of orientation was followed by an indoctrination phase that lasted five weeks. At this point I was described as an “Officer Candidate,” not to be confused with a “Candidate Officer,” which would occur later. During this period, we learned about the history of the Navy, what the ranks meant, the chain of command, and the phonetic alphabet. We were also taught the military customs, the traditions of the Navy, and regulations that were central to the culture of the Navy. We did a lot of drilling and had PT just about every afternoon.

We did the same physical training as the men that involved a series of calisthenics, pushups, sit ups, and that sort of thing. And there was an obstacle course, which we were put through most days. Some of my female classmates had a lot of trouble getting through the obstacle course because they hadn’t prepared themselves physically. My workouts prior to enlisting serviced me well, though I had difficulty getting over the wall. My height—I was only five feet and six inches tall—was a distinct disadvantage as I was unable to grab the top of the wall, which was beyond my reach. But one of the guys was always around to help those of us who were shorter to get over the wall. They’d hang over the wall with one arm down. You’d grab their arm and they’d help pull you over. We’d help each other as much as we could.

The most formidable part of the obstacle was the rope climb. It was daunting at first. I had never shinnied up a rope before and I wondered how the heck I was going to do this. I wasn’t sure how I was going to go about it, but was going to make it up that rope or die trying. Fortunately, the instructors told us how to do it. You just wrapped the rope around one of your legs and placed it between your feet, clamping them together creating a brake so that you can support yourself on your legs. The basic idea of this technique is to inchworm your way up the rope, by straightening your legs and pulling yourself up the rope by about a foot or two, then loosening the brake between your feet, pulling your legs up, and re-establishing the brake. You repeat this procedure until you reach the top. At first, I thought the whole thing was dumb, I mean how often was I going to climb a robe. But I knew I could do it. I just had to practice, which I did, which enabled me to finish the obstacle course in the allotted time, which was one of the requirements needed to pass the OCS course.

 I successfully completed the Officer Candidate Indoctrination course on Friday, November 2, 1973. The next day I was officially transferred to the Officer Candidate School and promoted to Officer Candidate. Classes began the following Monday.

One advantage in becoming an Office Candidate was the opportunity to wear a regulation Navy uniform, though they lacked the standard gold sleeve stripes or collar emblems that indicated rank. It’s its place we were issued a number of silver-colored bars based upon our class rank: one bar for a Candidate Ensign, two bars for a Candidate Lieutenant Junior Grade, three bars for a for a Candidate Lieutenant, etc. Sometime during those first days, we visited a tailor, for the uniforms were custom made.

Weekdays during training were busy and tiring. I’d have to get up early, shower, get dressed, make up my bed, and tidy up the room before morning formation. We’d then march to the mess hall as a unit to breakfast. After breakfast we’d march over to our first class. We’d line up in the classroom at attention until we were told to sit down. We had academic courses in the mornings and would march between classes. More PT in the afternoon, then homework in the evenings with lights out at 9 or 10 O’clock.

I had established excellent relationships with a number of my peers. The study partnerships that emerged from these relationships proved invaluable during the second phase of OCS because of the intensive course work. On average, we spent about six and a half hours a day in class covering a variety of subjects. Some of the courses were more complex than others, but there were lots of things to memorize and we were tested on a regular basis. Another benefit of the camaraderie formed during the indoctrination phase was the support that fellow classmates gave each other. If I couldn’t figure out something, there was always seemed to be somebody with a family member who had been in the service that knew the answer.

About half of the course work was devoted to naval operations, division management and leadership. The course in operations covered U.S. naval evolutions, operations, and an introduction to naval warfare doctrine. It was the most intensive in terms of the number of hours we spent in class. According to the current literature, the course is supposed to develop the student’s understanding of relative motion, surface ship operations, and naval command, control, and communications. I thought that this stuff was OK and necessary for me to have, but I didn’t think the likelihood of me being on a ship at that time was very likely. Although the knowledge would later be of help in understanding the messages I was dealing with when I became a communications officer.

The Division Officer Management course, I suppose, was designed to resemble the first tour of a Division Officer. [Division Officer from the web] The course was designed to teach the junior officer the importance of building and maintaining an effective work climate while providing positive oversight and management of resources. There was a lot of information on management, and not as much memorization as in some of the other courses.

The last course mentioned above, the course in leadership, was one of the most useful courses that I took in OCS. What you learned in the course was really important because it identified your boundaries. At what point do you assume leadership and manage your subordinates and at what point do you escalate—take it to a higher level—and what were your responsibilities in terms of disciplinary problems, and work problems, and basically the pecking order of your responsibilities. The course taught you that management and leadership had to work hand in hand and covered topics and strategies to achieve this goal.

About thirty percent of our classroom time was spent on a variety of subjects that included disciplinary administration, damage control, management information systems, classification and security, and seamanship. The first of these, about the administration of discipline, wasn’t very interesting as it involved a lot of paperwork. Boring stuff that you had to learn. It wasn’t very different from what you have to do in the civilian workplace if you have to terminate someone for cause. Damage control was all about handling emergencies onboard ship or at shore facilities: what to do, who to notify, that sort of thing. We were taught that the first thing to do was to identify and isolate the problem, otherwise you could be wasting time in a life and death situation. First priority is to get people out of spaces affected or away from danger. If it was a shore facility you had to evacuate the building and notify first responders. Second, you were supposed to treat the injured, get corpsmen or due what you can to help the injured. Concurrent with treating the injured, you needed to send May Day or message advising situation and requesting aid. Then make sure all crew or those on duty are accounted for. It was pretty interesting and informative. I didn’t think I was going to be on a ship, but the information on shore facilities turned out to be very important once I got into my first assessment as communications officer. Management of information systems was one of the hardest for me because I had no prior experience with computers. The personal computer was still far in the future when I went through OCS and all of the data processing centers in those days relied on large mainframe computers. The course covered all aspects of information systems (IT) management. It wasn’t exactly exciting, but I knew I had to learn it. I also knew that I needed to master it based on the jobs that were then available to women, which were mostly restricted to communications, supply, and such.

And then there was seamanship, which covered basic seamanship and small boat handling, another course that wasn’t very interesting to me, primarily because one of the key requirements was to memorize the rules of the road for navigation. For practical experience, we had to learn how to run and operate the YP boats maintained by the school for this purpose.

One of the things we had to learn was all aspects of basic seamanship and small boat handling. The school had a number of “YP” boats for us to practice on. The YP-654 class of yard patrol boats that we trained on were 81-feet in length, had an 18-foot beam, and a 6- foot draft. They were powered by two diesel engines that provided 12 knots of speed. Going out on the boats was a lot of fun, the weather was usually ideal, and it relieved the tedium of the classroom and all of that MARCHING. Each time you went out you would be assigned a different job (helmsman, navigator, deck hand, etc.) so that by the end of the training you had learned the duties of each crewmember. We went out during daylight hours at first, but later we had to navigate at night, which was much more difficult. That’s where understanding the rules of the road really became important. I was no stranger to boats having spent a lot of time in Minnesota while I was growing up It’s the land of ten thousand lakes and it’s seemed like everybody had a boat, so this part of my training was a snap.

The rest of the course work, about twenty-percent of the time, was spent on staff administration and personnel. It was all about the organization, systems, and techniques employed in the Navy for management of its human, material, and financial resources. Not very exciting stuff, but again information that you would need to know in order to do your job.

We were given half a day off on Saturday and all-day Sunday. Weekends gave me a chance to relax after a long week of classroom study and physical activities. We had to study every night, so there was no time during the week to take a break. We could go off base during our free time and a group of male and female classmates that I had become friendly with would go to town. Newport is steeped in history and it was fun visiting many of the old mansions and getting a feel for the place, especially for those of us that hadn’t been to Newport before. In the evening, we’d stop in to one of the many restaurants that lined the harbor and chill out before returning to the base before curfew.

Unfortunately, while in Newport I discovered that I was allergic to shellfish. I hadn’t had a chance to eat a lot of seafood growing up in Phoenix, and shellfish was something that I had rarely, if ever eaten. Most, if not all, of restaurants in Newport had a variety of shellfish on their menus. I quickly developed a taste for this delicacy of the sea, but every time I ate it, I’d get a headache and feel sick. I always limited myself to one glass of wine before, so I knew that it wasn’t the alcohol. The more often I had shellfish, the sicker I seemed to get. Finally, I figured out that it was a reaction to the shellfish, so I stopped eating crustaceans and started ordering fish. To this day I can’t eat shellfish without having an allergic reaction, though I still long for crab meat.

One weekend, I even learned how to carve vegetables. This came about after I approached the Filipino stewards who prepared and served the meals in the mess hall. They were very good at carving flowers out of vegetables, which they would include in food that was prepared for to us. We didn’t have a lot to do on the weekends, so I thought that’s kind of a fun skill to have. I always complimented the stewards as I went through the chow line on how nice the food looked and how good it was. My parents raised me to give positive feedback when you got good service from people. So, I talked to the members of my company and said, “Let’s see if we can have one of them over to teach us how to carve flowers out of vegetables on a free weekend day.” The stewards were surprised and very pleased to when we asked them come over and teach the future female officers how to curve radishes into flowers. So, they came over and gave us a lesson in the company area. We had a great time, although I must admit that it took a great deal of patience and attention to achieve the manual dexterity and technique required.

Towards the end of the OCS course, we were again subjected to the abandon ship drill, although this time it was made more realistic by the requirement that we jump off the ten-foot tower dressed in fatigues, with our boots on, and a backpack. In addition, there were men in the water waiting for us. They told us that these guys were acting the role of enemy swimmers attempting to take us prisoner and that we should try to evade them. Bill Bursal didn’t experience this when he took the test in 1956, it’s not mentioned in the current Navy literature, it wasn’t stated in any of the preparatory literature I received.[[7]](#endnote-7) It seems a ridiculous scenario now. I mean, really, enemy swimmers in the water around a sinking ship? I think the instructors just wanted to harass the women. We were only the second group of females to be trained with the men and I don’t think they thought we could be successful. In any case, I was determined to escape had no trouble getting away from guy who tried to grab hold of me. My self-defense training came through and I just kicked the guy posing as the enemy in a “delicate” body area, which shocked the other “enemy” swimmers, and leisurely swam to the side of the pool.

 As the days grew closer to graduation, I, along with the other members of my company, began thinking about where we wanted to go and what we wanted to do in the Navy. Warrant Officer Klokee was really a good guy and a great leader. He asked me what was more important: what I did or where I wanted to go? Well, I said, grew up in Arizona and Minnesota. I’d like a job managing people, but I’d also like to see other parts of the world. You need to go into communications and be a communication watch offer, he replied, because that’s where you’ll find the jobs in the places you want to be. There’s an opening for a communications officer in Naples, Italy. I’d recommend that to be your first choice. He was very good at guiding al of us that way. And that’s what I did, I opted to become a communications specialist and was sent to communication school the week after graduating from OCS and receiving my commission as an ensign dated February 15, 1974, two weeks before my twenty-second birthday. It’s kind of funny, but I was discharged from the Navy the day before after serving for five months as an enlisted officer candidate.

I graduated from OCS and received my commission on a Friday. The next Monday I started the course for communication officers at the Naval Communication School, which was also located in Newport. During the four weeks of instruction, I learned all aspects of both the management and technology of Navy communications. The course was intended to make you knowledgeable so you wouldn’t be totally green during you first assignment to one of the Navy’s communication stations. These multi-million-dollar facilities were filled with lots of expensive hardware and software. You would also be responsible for a number of petty officers and various enlisted ratings. So, you needed to know quite a bit about what you were going to do and what would be expected of you. You also needed to know how to manage people. The class was academically driven. We would learn different things each day, were given homework assignments to do at night, and were tested every other day. Some of the information was interesting, some was common sense, and some you had to spend a lot of time on.

**Naples**

# My request for duty in Naples came through while I was still enrolled in the communications school in Newport. I was very excited when I found out because that was my first choice. I certainly didn’t think it would be much of an adventure after all this training to be sent to Alabama or other mundane locations.

I must have told a number of people about my assignment to Naples. Apparently, the word had gotten out, because two of my young instructors approached me before I left Newport. They too were leaving Newport, they said, and would be deploying to ships in the Sixth Fleet headquartered in Naples. Would it be OK if they looked me up when they got there? Needless to say, I was quite flattered, but not very surprised. Most of the instructors at the school were very friendly. We’d talk after class. They were all very nice and quite charming, but I was only trying to be friendly.

## Before heading for the Naval Support Activity in Naples, Italy, my new duty station, I headed home to Phoenix for a week of much deserved leave. From Phoenix, I flew to New York where I picked up a flight to Italy. Since I was traveling under military orders on a flight paid by the government, I was required wear my uniform. I didn’t think much about it until I got on the plane and headed back to the coach section where my seat assignment was, not realizing how rare it was at the time to see a woman in uniform. Because my uniform looked a lot like those worn by the flight crew, some of the passengers I was traveling with thought I was a flight attendant. So, as I’m moving down the aisle to my seat, one of the passengers turns to me telling me that she was having trouble finding her seat.

“Can you help me,” she asked.

So, I did. As I moved further down the aisle, I came across a little old lady who was obviously having trouble placing her carry-on bag in the overhead luggage compartment. “Oh dear,” she said, “can you help me with my bag?”

It didn’t bother me that they thought I was a flight attendant and didn’t make a big deal out of it, so I started to help this woman too. While I was helping this little old lady with her bag, the real flight attendant in charge of this section of the airplane magically appeared.

“You can sit down now,” she said.

 No problem I replied. I think she liked the fact that I was helping people and didn’t seem to have any urgency with regard to getting us settled in.

When I arrived in Naples, I was met by my escort and taken to the base to check in and receive a “meet and greet” schedule for the following day. When I finally reached my accommodations, I slept like the “dead”. Everyone was great and made me feel welcomed at this NATO facility, which was officially designated as the Allied Forces Southern Europe Command that was usually noted as AFSouth.

The Command was formed in 1951 as a major subordinate command to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Casteau, Belgium. Besides having countless military offices on the base, AFSouth was a great shopping area. If you needed clothing, Italian art, jewelry or a cappuccino, it was all there. What was also there were older Italian men that followed you saying “bella, bella, ciao bella” and then throw kisses. It got really old and embarrassing so I went on the offense. When someone started throwing kisses and yelling bella, I immediately put my finger in my mouth as if I was going to throw up, groaning and feigning nausea. It was a pretty successful strategy. They were so embarrassed; they would stop what they were doing and immediately leave the immediate area. Because there were few American women and continuous American ships docking in Naples for fuel and replenishment, shopping at the commissary for food and many other retail products was sometimes difficult. Nice young men would approach you and respectfully engage in a conversation with the objective to secure a date. They were lonely and wanted to go out with a female. I was always nice and said I was in a committed relationship, but was flattered by their invitation. I decided to shop early on Saturday morning when the commissary opened and there were few people around to bother me.

I was a communications officer assigned to the Bagnoli Telecommunications Center located at Bagnoli, a few miles south of the main base. It was established in 1963 to support the Joint Forces Command headquartered at Nisida Island, Naples, under the command of a U. S. Navy Admiral in charge of AF South also held the national appointment of Commander-in-Chief United States Naval Forces Europe. The unit was tasked to provide communication support to shore-based activities in the Naples area. Most of the resources came from the communications department of the Naval Support Activity, Naples. In May 1968, its mission was expanded to include fleet support for units in the Mediterranean Sea and the base was renamed the Naval Communications Station, Italy.

There was no permanent housing for officers at the communication station or the main base, so I had to find accommodations off base. Naples, is a large metro area with beautiful views of the water. When my friend Jeanne arrived,we embarked on a mission to find an apartment. Jeanne and I were in the same OCS class together and had become friendly. She grew up in the Midwest and was the oldest of three children. She was raised by her mother, who struggled financially after she was abandoned by Jeanne’s father. Given the circumstances of her childhood, Jeanne probably felt that a career in the Navy would give her financial security. I liked Jeanne. She was smart had a good sense of humor, and we got along well. When we both received orders to Naples—she was also in my communication class—we decided we’d live together.

After some basic detective work, Jeanne and I learned that there were several “American ghettos” where Americans and some Brits lived. These areas tended to be a little further out from the center of the city and, as a little research revealed, were filled with families and subject to more robberies than the other sections where Americans tended to live. These places obviously did not appeal to us. Instead, we decided to try and find a place located in an Italian neighborhood. Someone, it may have been the base housing office, suggested we try and find an apartment in the suburban town of Baiae located on the far west side of the Bay of Naples about 15 miles from the city center. There, we found a very nice two-and-a-half-bedroom apartment that was surrounded by a balcony that overlooked the bay to the east and a vineyard to the west. Air conditioning was unheard of in Italy at the time, but the cool air off the bay coming through the balcony’s French doors keep us comfortable in all but the hottest days. Like air conditioning, most Italian homes lacked central heating. In the winter we relied upon portable electric heaters called “bombalas”.

There were only a few Americans in the two-building complex which met our objective to have an Italian living experience. We lived on the fifth floor with a family on the first floor that managed the property. When Jeanne or I had a male visitor arrive, the portiere (the porter), an elderly gentleman in his late eighties who was father of the property manager that lived in the building, would walk them up to the fifth floor and make sure that he was an expected guest. We appreciated his concern and watchfulness to keep us safe. There was an elevator that could be activated with a gettoni (token) so we always knew how physically fit our guests were by how winded they were after the hike up to the fifth floor.

Baiae, Italy, was a beautiful location. Once the exotic playground of Roman emperors Julius Caesar, Nero and Caligula, the one-time seaside resort of Baiae just north of Naples enticed and tickled the fancies of the first-century elite. Horace described it as “Nowhere in the world is more agreeable than Baia.” In its heyday, the Classical Roman city of Baia was the hedonist Las Vegas of the time, but now its remains are partying beneath the waves. Rich Romans built magnificent villas along the coastline that have since become submerged under water. Because the land of Baia and its surroundings are a volcanic area, the land has dropped six meters over the centuries. Today you can take a glass-bottom boat out from the harbor to view the ruins of these one-time sumptuous villas.

Desirable for its healing thermal baths, mild climate, and luxurious surroundings, Baia was conveniently situated in Campania of Southern Italy near the western corner of the Bay of Naples. The very essence of Baiae inspired a spirit of idleness and pleasure among the nobility, the rich, and the famous nearly two thousand years ago. Today, the thermal bathing complex is but a faint shadow of its former magnificence.

Early on, knowing that I would need transportation to and from the base from my offsite housing, I went ahead and ordered an automobile, which was delivered when I got to Naples. I decided on a Fiat, because it was an Italian-made car, and I figured that if anything went wrong it would be easier to fix. The payments were also within my budget. To pay for it, I took a loan from the Navy Federal Credit Union. I ordered the car, and when I went to pick it up the salesman delivering it started to show me the different parts of the car and how things worked: the lights, the break, the windshield wipers, etc. Of course, it came with a manual transmission, which I had never driven. And then I told him:

“I don’t know how to drive a stick shift. I bought the car from you, so now you have to teach me how to drive it.”

I can still see the look on his face. He was shocked, to say the least. I wasn’t at all hesitant about it. Once I have an objective in my mind, I don’t stop until I’ve accomplished it.

“I’m not accepting the car until you show me how to drive stick shift,” I said.

If he wanted his commission, he was going to have to teach me how to drive a car with manual transmission. So, he spent the next hour teaching me how to drive a stick shift**.**

I learned pretty quickly once I figured out how to engage the clutch, and then I was off. I only stalled the car in the middle of the road once or twice, which was quite remarkable considering I had never driven a manual transmission before. You should have seen the look on the salesman’s face when this happened, though. He wasn’t a happy camper.

It took me about 20 to 25 minutes to drive from my apartment in Baiae to the communication station in Bagnoli. It was a pretty drive. For the most part, it took me along coastline that had many beautiful views of the Bay of Naples. I rarely hit traffic because of the shift hours that we worked, which were different from the hours of a typical Italian workday.

## The communication station was responsible for processing all messages to and from the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. As the Communications Watch Officer, my job was to ensure that all these messages, which ranged from top secret to a mother’s birthday message to her sailor son, was delivered on an accurate and timely basis. Of the various types of messages handled, the most sensitive and secret were those sent to the nuclear powered ballistic-missile submarines that had a narrow window of opportunity to receive messages. The Navy, knowing that I would be handling this type of material had ordered the standard background investigation required for a Top-Secret Clearance, which was issued on May 8, 1974, while I was still undergoing orientation in Naples. I was responsible for seeing that all of the equipment was in working order and was in charge of seventy or so enlisted personnel as well as a number of Petty Officers.

Life as a Communications Watch Officer was not without unique challenges. The Petty Officers were very competent and took me under their wing guiding me in the first few months. Besides the shift work which was tough on the circadian rhythms causing sleeplessness or wakefulness at inappropriate times, some of the enlisted men and women would occasionally party before reporting for the 11:00 pm shift and would arrive **late or** intoxicated. I would not send them back to their housing because that would only reinforce the unacceptable behavior, so I made them get buckets of water filled with ammonia and had them begin mopping the floors. The more they mopped, the more they were forced to smell the ammonia, which caused some of them to throw up. Then they had to clean that foul smelling mess too. Most of them learned their lesson and never showed up drunk again. For those that did, it was a repeat performance. This unsatisfactory behavior would also be noted in their performance review. There were other disciplinary problems too. For example, I had to send one of the female enlisted personnel back to the United States for an abortion and reassignment.

At the start of my tour, I also had an ongoing problem with some of the male enlisted men and a few of the chief petty officers who refused to salute me because I was a woman. If they weren’t very close to me, I would pretend that they did not see me and ignore it, but if they were near me, I would immediately address them in a loud and commanding voice.

“Stop right there sailor (or chief in the case of petty officers) and face me.”

They’d stop, face me, and have this shocked look on their face, just like a deer in the headlights. They were surprised and didn’t know what to do. The younger ones thought they might be reported for deliberate failure to salute an officer. Some of the others looked annoyed and irritated because they probably didn’t like the idea of a female officer to begin with.

 “You don’t know me,” I’d say, “but if your failure to salute is because I’m a female, then you need to get over it right now. You salute the rank, not the person. Have you got that?”

I knew the importance of acknowledging authority by saluting and that the failure to do so went against everything the Navy stood for. My years of working at J. C. Penny as an assistant manager along with my OCS training give me the confidence and ability to confront the offending sailor in accordance with the leadership qualities expected of a line officer in the U. S. Navy.

On the night shift which was fairly slow, I would often engage individuals in conversations about where they were from, family, why they joined the Navy, interests and what were their professional objectives. Some of the responses were heartbreaking. I considered it an honor to help my team members achieve their objectives. Maybe I could make a difference by writing endorsements, helping them with their career objectives or enhance skills that would be useful in civilian life. While I was on duty, the unit felt like a family.

And then there was the unexpected. The Bay of Naples is a very volcanic area, which makes it highly susceptible of minor earthquakes. Most people have heard of Mount Vesuvius, which is still an active volcano, and its destruction of the ancient city of Pompei. But hardly anyone is aware of Camp Flegal Volcano, that I located immediately under a large part of the modern city of Naples and is just a potentially dangerous as Vesuvius.

 I was talking to one of the sailors one afternoon, when all of a sudden, the equipment started swaying. We looked at each other for the moment like two deer in the headlights. Then just as suddenly as it started the swaying stopped. We realized we had just gone through a mild earthquake. Fortunately, it didn’t affect any of the equipment, otherwise I would have had my hands full.

More women from Officer Candidate School followed Jeanne and I to Naples. Mary Jo became our close friend. Growing up on a Texas ranch, Mary Jo was smart and fun. Her family had settled in Texas and through a few generations had acquired a significant amount of land and investments in businesses. Although Mary Jo came from a wealthy family, she was very frugal. While Jeanne and I bought decorated porcelain containers for our kitchen to store staples such as sugar and flour, Mary Jo bought contact paper to cover empty coffee cans. She also had some hidden talents that only a girl from Texas would have acquired. One night, after having dinner in Rome on a weekend excursion with Jeanne and I, the three of us walked to the Trevi Fountain. Once there, we convinced Mary Jo to do her cattle calls, which she had learned while rounding up the cattle on her family’s ranch. We didn’t have much trouble since a few glasses of ~~little~~ vino had lowered her inhibitions.

“Whoooowee,” she started calling out in a loud Texas drawl.

We forgot that many of the local residents were sleeping and had bedroom windows open. Until they started yelling at us, that is. We stopped Mary Jo and left the area as quickly as possible. The last thing we wanted wasa headline in the local paper about U.S. Navy Officers arrested for disturbing the peace.

There was a beef and burgundy dinner on Wednesdays at the Officer’s Club. It was a good meeting place in a safe setting where we could socialize with other officers from around the area. The pilots would recant their flying experiencers, which was interesting at first. After a while their conversations about flying became dull, boring, and repetitive. I concluded that pilots, in general, were too narrowly defined. The only thing they talked about was flying, and to me it seemed as if they liked to think of themselves as “legends in their own minds.”

When Navy ships docked in the Bay of Naples the sailors weretold that if they fell in the water, they would be immediately taken to the Navy hospital. The Italians would dump everything imaginable including sewage into the Bay water. There would be signs on the ships and at the various base facilities stating “Loose Lips Sink Ships”. There were briefings about not disclosing any information because one needed to expect that there were spies looking for information. Most important was the advice for New Year’s Eve when many Italians at midnight threw items out the windows, following the traditional saying of “out with the old and in with the new.” The problem was that some of the old were washing machines, furniture and other items that landed and killed or impaired people.

Naples was a great city to be stationed in. The food was great, the people were pretty friendly; and the Italians, male or female, are generally very attractive. There was a plethora of historical sites, like Pompeii where the lava came down from Mount Vesuvius and covered or destroyed everything in its path. Tours were available everywhere, and so were the prostitutes.

Midway between the communication station where I was assigned and the main base in Naples, at the top of a hill along one of the city’s main thoroughfares, was a long stone wall that overlooked beautiful terrain and water beyond. It was a popular hangout for prostitutes. The most notorious, well known to the locals and tourists alike, was a short, rather stout woman, whose body was shaped like an egg, which gained her the well-chosen moniker of “Humpty Dumpty.” She was so famous that people would pay to have their picture taken with her. She would sit on the wall just like Humpty Dumpty and wait for the tourists to come by. The blush of youth was long gone but the picture business was highly lucrative. She was a legend. Naples was never boring, I loved its history, and the warmth of the Italians and the international community.

Being an attractive blond definitely had its advantages and disadvantages. In Naples, and Italy in general, as the men are unabashedly attracted to women. Sometimes I would even be approached by a stranger seeking to meet me.When they asked me out, I’d pretend not to understand them saying that I didn’t speak Italian, which was a bit of a lie, because I did know a little Italian. But unlike Pinocchio, my nose didn’t grow every time I told this fib, otherwise it would be huge.

In July, I received my first Fitness Report, which is known throughout the Navy by its acronym “Fitrep.” As Delores Acosta wrote in 1965, Navy’s Officer Fitness Report “constitutes the most important part of a naval officer's record. … Not only is an officer's Fitness Report the key to the selection for promotion and general assignment, but it is significant in such matters as consideration for command, education and continuation. It follows, therefore, that the Report should effectively discriminate, in terms of quality among naval officers.”[[8]](#endnote-8) To my great pleasure I received a glowing report, as reproduced verbatim below:

Ensign Millenacker [my maiden name] is a very bright and Alert Naval Officer who is sincere and enthusiastic in the performance of her duties. She is thorough, precise and attentive to the details of her work while always retaining a proper perspective of the broader aspects of her assignments. Her outstanding performance of duty has contributed measurably to the effective accomplishment of the mission of NAVCOMSTA, Italy. Ensign Millenacker actively strives for personal and professional self-improvement availing herself of any opportunity to broaden her knowledge and experience. On her own initiative, she arranged to visit the communications spaces in several operating units of the Sixth Fleet for familiarization and indoctrination and she is presently engaged in graduate study at Boston University working towards master’s degree in the field of education. Ensign Millenacker exhibits outstanding leadership qualities and her interpersonal relationships are totally impartial and unbiased as regards race, religion or sex. She is meticulously accurate with a high sense of personal responsibility for the quality of her work and accepts no less from her subordinates whom she guides and directs with tack and aplomb. She is quick to take the initiative, decisive in the most difficult situations, and possesses the ability to coordinate her work effectively with others. Ensign Millenacker is acutely aware of the need for frugality and economy in the expenditure of appropriated funds and in the employment of men and materials. She is a great credit to herself and is well qualified for promotion and highly recommended for retention in the U. S. Naval Service.

Although living in Naples was great fun, there were plenty of petty annoyances that we had to put up with. There was a large presence of active communist supporters in Italy at the time. They would conduct rallies and marches almost every week. We were instructed to stay away from them, which wasn’t much of a problem since they would tie up traffic for blocks, which we wanted to avoid anyway.

And then there was the horrific telephone service. It took several months for Jeanne and I to get a telephone installed in our apartment after we moved it. It worked well for a while and then quit. It took four months to have our service restored, despite the fact that Jeanne, who managed the telephone service for the base, called the telephone company every day. If this wasn’t annoying enough, it turned out that once we were reconnected, it seemed as if every incoming caller was obscene.

 The food in Naples was fabulous. By the end of my tour, I had gained 10 pounds, which was a lot considering that I only weighted 115 when I arrived. Everything was fresh and made from scratch. The meals were well balanced, and prepared mainly with olive oil, which was much different than the standard fair I experienced in the States. Even the cheeses were delicious. And then there were the dolci, which the Italians use to describe candy, confectionaries, and pastries, that were always freshly made and incredibly delicious. And let’s not forget gelato, which is the Italian version of ice cream. If you were in a shopping area, you would walk by restaurants or shops selling food and the smells were so enticing that you couldn’t help salivating like Pavlov’s dogs.

There was one particular Italian restaurant that Jeanne, Mary Jo, and I loved to frequent. It was situated on a hill that offered a spectacular view overlooking the Bay of Naples. The proprietor once owned an Italian restaurant in New York. After a decade in the United States, he and his wife returned to Naples where he opened a restaurant (the one we liked to frequent) that quickly became well known and quite successful. The couple had returned to Naples because she missed her family, which was quite prophetic, because she died about six months later. The owner, whom we met for the first time after he had been widowed for about a year, was very charming and personable. He always managed to touch base with his quests to make sure that they were enjoying their meal. We got to know him fairly well after a few visits and became quite congenial, that’s how we had found out about his wife and his experiences in the States. I wanted to learn how to cook real Italian food, so I asked him if he would give us cooking lesson. Before long a few of us were learning to cook at his restaurant during weekend days.

One year, as Thanksgiving holiday approached, Jeanne and I decided to host a dinner for the occasion. We invited the Italians we had gotten to know and our friend and neighbors in the Navy. I knew that our restaurateur was a widow, had spent a considerable time in the United States and was familiar with Thanksgiving. He had become such a friend to all of us that he had become part of the family. So, Jeanne and I asked him to join us. He was very touched that we thought enough of him to include him in our Thanksgiving celebration.

The kitchen in our apartment was fairly small, and while the crowd was out on the balconies that surrounded our apartment overlooking the bay and the vineyard, Jeanne and I were pulling the dinner together behind the scenes. The guests did not need to know that I figured out and pulled out the plastic packet containing turkey gizzards and other disgusting internal body parts after the turkey was cooking. Fortunately, I was able to get it out before the plastic melted. We didn’t have enough large mixing bowls for making the dressing so we simply used a white plastic garbage bag. We closed the kitchen door so our guests wouldn’t see shaking the stuffing and a plastic garbage bag. We had made aesthetically pleasing appetizers to start and paired appropriate wines for each course. The turkey and stuffing miraculously turned out well with the warm juices spitting out as we carved the turkey. We strained the few lumps out of the gravy and whipped the potatoes to perfection. The vegetables were fresh and steamed and my pumpkin pies turned out great, even though I covered some minor errors with whipped cream. It was a miracle that everything came out so well. We all had a great time. My friend, the restaurant owner praised our great Thanksgiving dinner and hospitality. We knew it was good meal, made better with enough wine, but it wasn’t up to the caliber of his restaurant.

On another dinner outing with my friends, Mary Jo was driving us to another restaurant located fairly high on a hill directly up from the pier where the ships were docked. She had passed the restaurant at the crest of the hill and continued down quite aways before slamming on the breaks. She calmly shifted into reverse and backed the Fiat all the way up the hill. The few brave people who were going down the hill wound up on the sidewalk screaming at her through the driver’s window.

The longer we lived in Italy, the more our driving became like the Neapolitans. If traffic was all backed up at an intersection and the sidewalk was empty, we’d drive on the sidewalk to make it through the intersection quicker.

**Inshore Undersea Warfare Group Two**

After returning to Italy from leave, I contacted the base personnel office in order to find out how to contact the detail officer who would be responsible for placing me in my next duty station. “Detailers” is the Navy term for the folks in human resources who were responsible for locating the appropriate job openings within the Navy for those whose present duty assignments were nearing completion. I knew that my 18-month tour of duty in Naples would be over in November and I wanted to be assigned somewhere in the Norfolk area so that I could be near Dean, whose ship was home-ported there.

When it was time to rotate to my new assignment, I received orders to report to the Inshore Undersea Warfare Group Two (IUWG-2) at the Amphibious Navy base in Little Creek, Virginia. The mission of the group, which was part of the Naval Special Warfare Command, was to protect inland waterways, harbors, and friendly shipping and military vessels from sneak attack and sabotage from enemy craft, swimmers and other threats (such as mines) by deploying under water sensors and explosives. Once I knew where my new assignment would be, I was able to start making arrangements to ship my personal possessions and household goods back to the United States. My friend Jeanne also received orders to a new assignment. Instead of diving up some of the stuff that we had purchased for our apartment, we decided to give it to Mary Jo, who was staying in Italy. And then there were the administrative detail that had to be taken care of before I could leave Italy: I needed to receive my final fitness report from the Communications Station, turn in various items I had checked out, close out at the base and obtain travel orders.

As was customary, I was given a “Hail and Farewell” party at the Officer’s Club a few days before my departure. A Hail and Farewell event is a military tradition whereby those coming to and departing from an organization are celebrated. This may coincide with a change in command, or be prompted by any momentous organizational change. It is a time to honor those who have departed the unit and thank them for their service. At the same time, it is a welcome to those who are joining and introduces them to the special history and traditions of their new organization. This celebration builds organizational camaraderie and esprit de corps. It supports a sense of continuity through change. The event took place during happy hour at the club. Capt. William J. Longhi, the commanding officer of the communication station gave a nice speech extolling my virtues without mentioning any of my foibles. The feedback was very positive which meant a lot to me because I wanted to make a difference.

After the Farewell event I stayed in temporary housing for a few days until my commercial flight that would take me back to the States was scheduled. When it came time to leave Ital, I boarded my plane feeling sad that I was leaving my friends and “family” but excited to start a new phase of my life. I loved living in Italy and the Italians who had warmly welcomed me and the U.S. service members that had become my friends and family. I would even miss driving by Humpty Dumpty who sat on the wall until a customer came for “servicing”. It was a tribute that even a woman that had a Humpty Dumpty body could have a thriving business and market herself on a well-travelled road. I would not miss the constant residential phone outages and the slow sense of urgency to restore service nor would I miss the nearly every weekend communist marchers that disrupted the downtown area.

By the time I arrived at the Inshore Undersea Warfare Group 2 at Little Creek, Virginia, I had been promoted to lieutenant (jg). When reported for duty as an administrative officer, I was the first and only woman assigned to the IUWG-2.My assignmentto the unit wasnot looked upon with greater favor, especially by the enlisted men. One the first day one of the enlisted went out of his way to inform me that I was the only female and they even had to renovate the bathroom just to accommodate me. It was clear that I would need to overcome the animosity within this “boys” network. On a few occasions, the working for me would tell me they didn’t like working for a woman. I’d just smile when some of them said that, just point on the stripes on my sleeve, and tell them to “just focus on the rank. Some chose to make sexual comments about me to other sailors acting like they were trying to be quiet, but loud enough so I would hear. If it was easily heard, I would call the individual to attention and address the Navy’s expectations and the outcome if they chose to repeat it. My tone was low, measured and stern to ensure that the individual understood not to repeat the behavior. There were a few other incidents before the “boys” gave up. I ramped up the penalty after each incident to reinforce consequences.

I same point during my tour with IUWG-2, the order came down for all personnel in the unit who had not completed the yearly rifle qualification to do so forthwith. Now, it was true that I wasn’t really a Marine, but I was part of the unit and I wasn’t going to let that, or the fact that I was a woman stop me from qualifying on the rifle range. True, I had first fired a weapon at OCS, but the marksmanship training given by the Landing Force Training Command at Little Creek would be my first experience with the M-16 and the 45-caliber pistol.

I really wanted to do well because wanted to show them that I could do just as well as they could, or better, even though I was a woman. It was important for me to succeed in order to gain their trust and respect. It was a piece of cake. I had a good eye and steady hand and it was easy for me to qualify earning marksmanship medals as both an Expert Rifleman and Expert Pistol Shot. I became somewhat of a celebrity after a picture of me shooting the M16 appeared in an article published in the base newspaper titled “That’s Not Annie Oakley.”[[9]](#endnote-9) The writer emphasized the fact that I was the first and only woman to be assigned to the IUWG-2. I found it very condescending when he asked if firing weapons or doing so called “men’s work” took away from my femininity. “No Way” I answered, thinking to myself, “What planet is this guy from.” I mean what did he expect me to say. Here I am on the rifle range, in fatigues, holding an M-16 rifle. He was trying to be very nice, but although he was lieutenant, I don’t think he knew how to relate to a female officer. There weren’t many of us. “So if you to see a woman on base with an M-16 carefully aiming-in,” he wrote, “it is NOT Annie Oakley, but Ltjg Candyce Henry just being part of the IUWG-2 team.” He meant it as compliment, but if I were a man, he would not have felt the need to compare my shooting with anyone else.

The hazing finally abated after I qualified for a sharpshooter on the M16 and marksman on the 45 which brought some respect from my fellow service members. The biggest attitude change occurred, however, because of the mandatory physical training. I had speed walked or jogged for years because it helped wind me down and improved my sleep. So, running four miles was not a problem. I just “put the pedal to the metal” and ran the course.

That had gained my respect with E6 and E7s. They even invited me for a drink after work on a Friday. I ordered a beer to be social, never finished it because I don’t like beer. I started asking questions about their Navy experiences, families, and future plans making sure I focused on each person both visually and physically. I oozed with interest because I wanted them to feel some regret. One of my fellow officers arranged for me to go flying with two pilots. They then began to “stop and go” so they barely touched ground before accelerating up. The “boys” clearly wanted to make me sick. Since my mama didn’t raise a fool and I rarely have motion sickness, I just relaxed my body and nodded off. I awoke when they landed the plane.

One of my collateral duties was to be a casualty assistance officer for when a service member was missing, injured, or deceased. A Clergy member and myself would go to the home of the service member and share the news, offer comfort and discuss pertinent things for next steps. One evening, I received a call from the base Officer and met with the base minister. There had been a death of a serviceman. We jointly proceeded to the family’s home. The serviceman had been beaten to death in a park and found partially clothed. I was composed, gave comfort as much as possible, and provided high level information in a packet besides reach numbers.

It is one thing to lose someone in the line of duty but entirely different when someone is beaten to death in a public park twenty minutes from home for any reason. The second time I was called was a death resulting from a car accident. While it was tragic with a young life snuffed out, it was easier with death instantaneous. I could cope more easily with an accident than a murder. I couldn’t help but sob all the way home. Young lives snuffed out before they had barely begun.

While assigned to the IUWG-2, I was sent to the Naval Amphibious Base for four weeks of temporary duty at the Counseling and Assistance Center. From there, I was sent to the Naval Drug and Rehabilitation Center, Naval Air Sation, Miramar, San Diego, California, for eight weeks of training at the Navy Drug Abuse Counselor Course and then to the Naval Alcohol Rehabilitation Center for two more weeks before returning to IUWG-2 as the Director of Counseling Services. Drug and alcohol use was a major personnel problem in the Navy at the time, and I was chosen for this duty based on my ability to work with people at all different levels.

I would have stayed in the Navy (I had been offered the change to transfer to the regular Navy), but I had gotten married while stationed in Naples and had gotten pregnant. The idea of trying to raise a family with two serving officers did not appeal to me because of the difficulty in trying to arrange assignments that were geographically close enough to remain in contact. So I left the Navy.

1. Ebbert, Jean and Marie-Beth Hall, *Crossed Currents: Navy Women in a Century of Change*, 181 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ebbert and Hall, C*rossed Currents*, 192. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. E. R. Zumwalt, Jr., Admiral U.S. Navy, CNO, Z-gram #116; dated 7 August 1972, Naval History and Heritage Command, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/z/list-z-grams/z-gram-116.html>. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. William Burdsal, *Memoirs of a Human Being*, 147. Note: Mr. Burdsal recollections cover his experiences as an OCS student being on October 16,1956. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Swim Qualification Video narration, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-OrKyA1l0v4&feature=youtu.be. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. M.C. Festing, “The Value of Close Order Drill in Training the Soldier for War.” [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Burdsal, *Memoirs of a Human Being*, 147. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Delores Acosta, An Analysis of the Navy Officer Fitness Report and its Relationship to the Promotional System, 13. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Cicere, Mike. “That’s NOT Annie Oakley.” *The Gator*, March 19, 1976. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)