

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
EVE M. GRUBISIC  
Navy WAVES, World War II.

2001

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**Grubisic, Eve M.,** (1915-2008). Oral History Interview, 2001.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 15 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 15 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 15 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Grubisic, an Ashland, Wisconsin native, discusses her service in the Navy WAVES during World War II. Previous to enlistment, Grubisic states she was the principal of a rural school. She recalls many women in the area were entering service, and she chose the WAVES because her younger sister had enlisted in them. Sent to boot camp at Hunter College (New York), she says she quickly tired of doing trivial activities and felt relief when she started training with the Hospital Corps as a pharmacist's mate. After getting ill during a nasal resection, she discusses being sent to Bainbridge (Maryland) to work in an office typing forms. Grubisic explains she didn't get enough medical training and she did not miss typing forms after her discharge. Two months after discharge, she speaks of getting married to a Navy man whom she'd met on a train, and whom she divorced thirteen months later. Grubisic mentions her brother was also in service with the Army during the war. She talks about using the GI Bill to get a license for teaching high school English and losing touch with fellow servicewomen.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Grubisic (1915-2008) was born in Albia, Iowa and grew up near Ashland, Wisconsin. She served as a pharmacist's mate and typist in the Navy WAVES during World War II. Afterwards, she attended Northland College (Wisconsin) and taught high school English, eventually settling in Milwaukee (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2001.

Transcribed by Daniel Walker, 2010.

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

**Interview Trascript:**

- Jim: All right. We're off and running. I'm interviewing Eve Grubisic. February ninth, two-thousand oh one. What year were you born, ma'am?
- Eve: 1915.
- Jim: 1915. In—somewhere in Iowa?
- Eve: Albia, A-L-B-I-A, Iowa.
- Jim: Why did you move to Wisconsin?
- Eve: I don't recall now.
- Jim: And what age were you then?
- Eve: I could have been just one year old.
- Jim: So it was shortly after you—
- Eve: Yeah.
- Jim: And then you grew up in northern Wisconsin? Near Ashland?
- Eve: Yes.
- Jim: When the United States got in the War, what prompted you to consider being a servicewoman?
- Eve: Well, I guess because of the work I was doing, and I thought, "Well, I could teach children best if I went into the service." I think it turned out that way.
- Jim: What work were you doing?
- Eve: I was teaching in a rural school just before I went in.
- Jim: Grade school or a high school?
- Eve: Well I actually started at a one room school, then I went to a two room school and I became the principal of that two room school. Then I moved to a bigger community and I became the principal there, and then I went back and picked up some more education then went into high school teaching and I taught high school English.

- Jim: So when the war started, that's what you were doing, teaching high school?
- Eve: Let's see, yeah, I had been teaching—no I think that's not right, I still went in right out of that second school—that bigger school where I became principal.
- Jim: How did you go about getting in the Navy? This wasn't a common thing for girls to be doing this.
- Eve: Well, they were very popular up there. Many of the women were going into the WAVES. I really wanted the Marines, but it ended up my sister had decided—she got the bug to go, and she became a WAVE and so then I thought, "Well," we were quite a ways apart in age, but we were very good friends—my sister and I were very good friends—
- Jim: Was she older or younger?
- Eve: No, she was younger—she was eight years younger than I.
- Jim: Oh my goodness.
- Eve: So I went into the WAVES too.
- Jim: So you wrote a letter and they said, "Come down for an examination," And that's how it went?
- Eve: Well, something like that.
- Jim: Where did they—your first training station—where was that?
- Eve: I went directly to—it's on there someplace—that school evades me, it should be in the left hand column—all the WAVES went there—oh here it is, Hunter College.
- Jim: Hunter College.
- Eve: I was trained at Hunter College in the USN.
- Jim: What kind of training did they give you?
- Eve: Well there was—we went to the boot—the regular boot, and I didn't care for that at all because I was older, see, and I had already been earning money where lots of us were—
- Jim: Were just youngsters.

- Eve: Yeah. So after that was over, then I was a little happier with it—I thought maybe I had made a mistake because I had to go through all that—washing the dishes and all the little trivial things they had us learn to do. So then I was put into the Hospital Corps and trained to be a Hospital Corps—corps-lady I guess, or something.
- Jim: A corps-woman—corpsman.
- Eve: Corpsman, yeah.
- Jim: Was that at Hunter College or you went to a hospital—
- Eve: That was still at Hunter and we trained right there, we didn't leave Hunter; that was a fabulous school too; of course the wealthy had had that school, and the government took it away from them; I think they resented the military being in there.
- Jim: Probably.
- Eve: Let's see; from there then I was placed at Bainbridge; Bainbridge, Maryland.
- Jim: At a hospital at the dispensary or something like that?
- Eve: First of all I was put in—they did resections; nasal resections, and the head of that—because I got quite ill once, they were so rough, you know, and they would chisel these poor men's noses, and I didn't pass out, but I got very sick, and I got out of there; I had to get out of there. So then I was put in an office, then I finished up in the Navy, I was still typing like mad all those different forms that we had to fill out.
- Jim: In Bainbridge, you finished your career right there in Bainbridge?
- Eve: Then the War ended of course about that time too. I asked—I had met this fellow that I married at that time, so they were willing to do a lot of nice things for me because they wanted the older women, especially somebody with the training that I had had; so they offered me Alaska and several things, but I turned them down because I wanted to go home and get married.
- Jim: What year did you enter the military, do you remember?
- Eve: I was in only thirteen months really, total; I was—
- Jim: So it really was the last thirteen months of the War then?

- Eve: Yeah, so it must have been Forty-five, but I can't—I should have checked that—
- Jim: The war ended in August of Forty-five—
- Eve: Is that what the records show? I don't know. I don't think it was fall; it could have been though. We didn't get that in there, did we? I don't know—
- Jim: No. Did you leave the service right after the War?
- Eve: Yes. Immediately. I was married—I was out of the service in April and I was married in June. I don't think it will be in here—
- Jim: Well you obviously went into the service in 1944; a year before that.
- Eve: Probably the fall of Forty-four.
- Jim: Fall of Forty-four.
- Eve: It could have been August then.
- Jim: Did you enjoy working at the hospital other than being in surgery?
- Eve: Well, I wasn't in there long enough to really get a strong feeling about it, but I missed the idea that I was taken out of the operating room; I really don't think it was very sensible of them to put me in there anyway with no medical background—my work had all been in education.
- Jim: They didn't give you any training work in surgery?
- Eve: No, I was—the training that I had at—
- Jim: Hunter College.
- Eve: At Hunter. I guess I didn't miss it—I didn't like all the typing I had to do; it was day after day after day you typed—what was it we were typing, about eight forms? They're still doing that, the government is.
- Jim: Yes, they do that a lot. A lot of paperwork in the government. So, your future husband, did you meet him while he was in the Navy too?
- Eve: Yes.
- Jim: What was he doing?

Eve: I've forgotten the title; he was working with guns—now what was he doing? My marriage broke up after thirteen months too, so I had lost track of all that. He was stationed nearby, and we met on the train. I was going to I think Philadelphia and he got on that same train, and there might have been about seven WAVES; we were all going to Philadelphia—there was no place to sit because there were so many people; so this man sat with me and he wanted to know about me and I gave him my first name which was probably a mistake, because then when we got back—I think we were gone for that weekend—when we got back they said, “You have a telephone call. Somebody wants Eve.” And that was me, and he remembered that my name was Eve because my friends and I were chatting and everything; he tracked me down, because he knew where we got on the train—he was already on the train—so the romance started. What was he in though? I don't think it will be in this, this is Bayfield County.

Jim: What is this book here?

Eve: This is the Bayfield County; this is the one that they had made for us—I was from Bayfield County.

Jim: Oh yes, I know. That's nice. Hold that up for just a second; let me see if I can get the camera on that. Well that's nice. Alright, very good. Well that was a nice thing to do.

Eve: Wasn't that nice? And of course they—I just saw my brother's picture too—my brother was in the Army; He would be under G. My marriage name was Riordan but I eventually got an annulment, and the court allowed me to take my maiden name back. So it becomes very confusing, because the court said that she [Eve's daughter Gayle] was to keep her father's name which was Miller—not Miller, Riordan, but I could go as Grubisic.

Jim: Did your sister stay in?

Eve: No, she left at about the same time.

Jim: Where does she live?

Eve: She is now living in Arizona half of the year, and half of it in northern Michigan.

Jim: Oh.

Eve: But she didn't stay—there's my brother, and there's my sister—

- Jim: And there's you.
- Eve: That's me.
- Jim: Oh my. That's a cute picture.
- Eve: Thank you.
- Jim: Your sister—
- Eve: Yeah, she's eight years younger than I am—what does it say about her? Town of Eileen is where we lived.
- Jim: It says Hunter College and so forth.
- Eve: Oh see, now she went in one twenty five, so my dates should be there too.
- Jim: Three Forty five—you went in on three Forty five.
- Eve: Yes, and she went in a month ahead of me or two months ahead of me. And it was interesting too, she wanted some other choice and then they decided in as much as her sister was in, she would stay in there too. So she had no—they didn't carry out her wishes.
- Jim: I've forgotten what I was going to ask you—when you got out of the service, did they use your GI Bill?
- Eve: I did to some extent, I think—let's see now; yes, I used it on—I completely left—I had been an elementary teacher and I completely left that and went to high school education and became an English teacher, then I used the GI Bill to get the necessary credits to get my license.
- Jim: Oh, where was that?
- Eve: I went to Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin.
- Jim: When you were with the WAVES, were you the first class or second class of WAVES or were there several before you, do you know?
- Eve: Oh dear, it was quite a while after they had been already very active. They had lots of WAVES by then. I really can't say which wave it was.
- Jim: How big a class were you in?



- Eve: Oh, it was large. I know when we had to march, you were way back there. I will have to just say a couple hundred because I really don't remember.
- Jim: Did you keep in contact with any of those folks?
- Eve: I did for a while, but as life goes, you know—
- Jim: Everybody goes their own way.
- Eve: Yeah. I don't hear from *one* of them any more; maybe it was my fault, maybe I started not writing or whatever.
- Jim: When you don't have much in common it's hard to stay in touch, isn't it?
- Eve: Yes, yes; I often wish that some of them I could still talk with; My daughter and I were looking at some of the pictures; it kind of became nostalgic, I felt kind of real bad because I had lost track of all of them; may I pull all that out?
- Jim: Sure, want me to get something out of there? I'm going to stop this in a second.
- Eve: I don't know how much of this you're going to want to see. Gayle said to bring all the memorabilia I had.

**[End of Interview]**