

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Bettye McCubbin Interview

Conducted by James Newberry

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Transcribed by Museum of History and Holocaust Education Staff

Born in 1921, Bettye McCubbin grew up in Kansas City. She left college to work for the United States Employment Service and later got a clerical job with Pratt & Whitney, a manufacturer of airplane engines. After the war McCubbin wrote for the Kansas City Star and married her high school sweetheart, a World War II pilot. They moved to Georgia in 2004.

Full Transcript

Video crew: Legacy series, McCubbin, Take one.

McCubbin: Alright, you got it.

Interviewer: All right this is James Newberry and I'm here with Bettye McCubbin on Thursday May 21, 2015 in the social science building at Kennesaw State University and Ms. McCubbin you agree to this interview?

McCubbin: Certainly.

Interviewer: Great, so let's start at the beginning tell me when and where were you born?

McCubbin: I was born in a very small farming community a few miles from Kanas City, Missouri called Lee Summit, Missouri, September 19, 1921 almost 100 years ago, not quite.

Interviewer: And what was your full name at birth?

McCubbin: Bette Jane Hill - that's why she put the 'e' on the end it was such a plain name Betty Jane.

Interviewer: [chuckles] So tell me your parents' names.

McCubbin: Nayoma Jane Young that was her unmarried name and my father was Arthur E. Hill. Is this an intelligence test or what? [laughs]

Interviewer: Now count from 10 now. [laughs]

McCubbin: Okay.

Interviewer: And what did they do for a living?

McCubbin: Well, my dad was farmer and but he also did some other things like he bought seed and fields all the way to the Canadian border and — blue grass seed and my mom was a housemaker, a housekeeper, a mother you might say. We had five in our family.

Interviewer: And where did you fall in the line of children?

McCubbin: I was next to the youngest. I have a younger brother, there were 5 of us so I had two brothers and two sisters.

Interviewer: Describe your home life there.

McCubbin: It was very nice I didn't realize the inconveniences 'cause we had, we had no outdoor plumbing, no electricity. I mean, we studied by lamp light cause this was back a few years. It was fun for young kids, you know, we didn't realize that we were disadvantaged. It was fine, freedom of roaming the fields, feeding the cows and the chickens and all the rest was a pleasant childhood.

Interviewer: When you say disadvantage. What do you mean?

McCubbin: Well, I mean we didn't have all the conveniences like the cell phones and all the rest that we have now or even like I say running water. We had a pump. We heated the water on a stove, a wood stove so, you know, lots of inconveniences, but we didn't realize it.

Interviewer: Where did you go to school?

McCubbin: Well, I went to a school in town, we called it, in Lee Summit it was an elementary all the grades through 6th and just a small town school and the teachers were as anywhere were so, so like some didn't like the others.

Interviewer: And what was your best subject?

McCubbin: Well, let's see, I always liked English and poetry all the creative types studies. I finally majored in sociology thinking I was gonna save the world bring out all those people out of poverty and all the rest, but didn't work out quite that way.

Interviewer: So, describe Lee Summit what was the size of the city?

McCubbin: You think it would have a mountain if it's gonna be a summit, wouldn't you? but no there's no mountain as far as I know, there is no summit, it was just a small town. Pretty much a farming community. Everybody went into town on Saturday night that was the big day of the week and little kids got ice cream cones and soda pop. No, not a lot drinking or carousing. Or — It was a just a very conservative farming community.

Interviewer: What kind of kid were you?

McCubbin: Uh-oh, now were getting down to the nitty gritty. You should ask my mother and father and we can't since they're not around anymore. But I was shy timid which you would never know now and in school I always felt inadequate course I went into a city school from the farm so we were kids from the country, you know, so you had kinda had a reputation before you got there- not being quite bright or whatever of course kids in the country, they wore, what was it?, long underwear you had to do this cause you couldn't walk through the snow to school and the kids in town thought, they that was pretty ridiculous, but other than that being shy and being not really— I wouldn't say I was really hap—as soon as I got home from school I was perfectly happy. Everything at home was great. But my school life I always felt shy and inadequate.

Interviewer: So, did you have any friends?

McCubbin: Not really, not really. You don't have a next-door neighbor with four kids. It's miles down the road before there weren't any other playmates so my brother turned out to be my best pal. He was about four years younger, so we did everything together.

Interviewer: What was his name?

McCubbins: We called him A.E. He was named after my dad, but we called him A.E.- Arthur Edward. After him. We just had a lot of good times together.

Interviewer: So at 6th grade did you go to a different school?

McCubbin: Yes, when I was in about the fourth grade we moved from this little town of Lee Summit to Kansas City and that was quite the adjustment to a big town school from a little farm place and that was quite the adjustment, but they had everything available a lot more courses available, better teachers and all the rest, so my family, my mom and dad, decided, you know, we need a better school for the kids. It's really the reason we moved to the larger city.

Interviewer: Were you living in a neighborhood at that point?

McCubbin: Yes. Mmh-hmm.

Interviewer: So how your socialization or socializing change?

McCubbin: It was difficult you know it was quite a change from just a little town where I had not many friends to a big town school and we took a cow with us. My mother thought we should have a cow and have milk for the family, and it was in a neighborhood where there was some land available with the house so we staked the cow out. We had fresh milk and all my friends thought that was really weird- they thought all the milk came out of the bottle and they didn't understand how we could go down and get ourselves a bottle of milk.

Interviewer: Did you milk it?

McCubbin: No, I was too young at that stage. They didn't trust me, I guess. 4th grade.

Interviewer: Describe the schools in Kansas City.

McCubbin: Well at that time I think they pretty well accepted as a little bit above average. I think it's gone downhill since that time. The rating of the schools there. But at that age I didn't grade it very much. I guess I thought we could have had a lot more recreation time, recess time. We had so much time in classrooms, but that was the program.

Interviewer: Did you continue to excel in English?

McCubbin: Well, excel, I don't know. That was my best subject probably. I didn't like math or you know anything related to figures. My husband and I are just the opposite. He's an engineer and he deals with figures and I do words and scrabble and stuff and he does all the ones with the numbers so very opposite, very much opposite.

Interviewer: Tell me about meeting him in high school.

McCubbin: Well, you see, I knew he was in the group. You know, back then we just had groups at church, at school. We did things together then. Went to parties together and so he was just one of the —and I had my very first date with him at Missouri University. So, we went to high school for four years. I just sorta knew him as a friend and, and they had what they called literary societies. Quite the thing- you had to belong to a literary society and each one had their colors and their jackets. The whole bit. He was in the top one, red and white, I always wanted to wear his jacket cause it was red and white, but the boy I was going with jacket was grey and blue so I thought I had a real disadvantage there because I didn't even know him that well until we went to the university.

Interviewer: So how did you choose Missouri University?

McCubbin: Well, it was cheaper. Say no more because, you see, it's in-state so you didn't have to pay out-of-state tuition.

Interviewer: It was a practical choice?

McCubbin: Very practical. It was probably the only place I could have gone.

Interviewer: Tell me what prevented you from going there immediately after high school?

McCubbin: Well, I had appendectomy so I couldn't go with my friends the first year, so I had that year in-between and that's when I went to California with my sister and four of her friends. Whose husbands were all in the service. I thought that would be quite an adventure and it was. We all worked for the United States employment service while we were there. Which was a couple years, I guess— No just one year actually.

Interviewer: What was the employment service?

McCubbin: Well, it employed all of the workers to make the planes for Boeing. All the big plane manufactures were in that Los Angeles area.

Interviewer: In so this is about 1938-39?

McCubbin: I graduated high school in '39 so it was between '39 and Pearl Harbor and '40-'39 and '40.

Interviewer: Did you have an awareness of what was going on in Europe at that time?

McCubbin: Not too much until Pearl Harbor. You know it seemed like we were kinda blind to the situation now how Hitler was gobbling up all the countries. We vaguely knew about it, but it was secondary thought and of course everyone at that point were very antiwar and they said, "Let them solve their problems. We don't want to get involved." That was the feeling of most everyone that why should we get involved in a war in Europe. That's before they realized we might be speaking German if we didn't. [Big smile]

Interviewer: So, there wasn't an expectation there might be that the United States was going to be involved in the war?

McCubbin: No, no. Not till after Pearl Harbor. The minute Pearl Harbor— it was Sunday night, we were all at the young people's meeting in church and all the boys and they said, "Where do we go? Where do we go to register! We're going to get rid of Hitler." I mean they were all already at that point. If, if, you know, if Japan can come over and bomb us then they were all ready to defend the country, which was nice.

Interviewer: Let's go back to the employment service in Los Angeles. So, you moved from Kansas City to Los Angeles. Was that a transit—.

McCubbin: I didn't move. I just went for a lark with my sister. Her husband was in the service, so I was just there for that year.

Interviewer: Tell me about your job with the employment service.

McCubbin: It was quite interesting, though, the way they had this figured out. Of course, everybody was looking for a job, you know, that paid well with the airplane factories so they had a huge group and they had to fill out their application and then we had to get the application and take it to the CEO or whoever is in charge of that particular plant and then they— so for young kid, I guess I could call a young kid at that point. It was fun. It was interesting- met a lot of people. It was a nice group of other young girls.

Interviewer: How much money did you make?

McCubbin: Oh, probably around that hundred dollars a month maybe it went up to a hundred and twenty-five, I don't know. But we never felt—we felt, “Oh that's great” 'cause everything else was cheaper too.

Interviewer: And where did you live?

McCubbin: Well at this point we just rented, and they had what they called Office of Price Control- something that took care of the Army wives. They had a listing of what's available for rent, which the government controlled and they would give you a listing of what— I guess they also— what did they call it when they controlled the pricing?, OPA, Office of Pricing Administration, that they couldn't raise the price above a certain — for the wives of the service men. So we were always able to find a place, not necessarily an elegant place, but a place to live and that was a interesting experience 'cause we got to know —Of course the other men, lots of men, out there were associates of my sister's husband.

Interviewer: Did you have any fun or it mostly just working?

McCubbin: Oh it was fun, it was fun. We didn't really realize the severity of the war 'cause at that age, I don't think anybody does. It just, it was a lark, you know, “oh, good helping you- the war effort.” As far as really— not too much concern. I guess we just took for granted we were gonna win. Maybe that why we weren't depressed 'cause we thought, “well, we was gonna' win this war” and didn't think about it in a while.

Interviewer: So, when you heard the news of the Pearl Harbor attack, were you in Los Angeles or Kansas City?

McCubbin: I was in Kansas City.

Interviewer: And you were at a sort of church get together?

McCubbin: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And was your future husband there?

McCubbin: No, no he wasn't. He went to church kinda off and on. [laughs] He wasn't at that meeting.

Interviewer: So, um you returned from Los Angeles you were able to start at Missouri University?

McCubbin: Right.

Interviewer: So, tell me about your life there. You were part of a sorority correct?

McCubbin: Right. My poor dad was working his hand and foot to put me through college. I don't know why I thought I had to be in a sorority but I think I got something like a scholarship because they wanted me to help with rush week and so it didn't cost much more to belong to the sorority then it would to just pay for room and board so it worked out ok and it was fine. We enjoyed it of course, a bunch of girls together and that was, as I say, all of the other service men from the Air Force from the Coast Guard from the Navy, Army everything they sent all those guys to the university to take courses to take classes to prepare them for the next step upward whatever that was so there were lots of guys on campus and activities and dances and so it wasn't the sad, sad depressed time and we did make an effort to collect—I know the sorority sent us out with little wagons to collect used grease from the restaurants for ammunition, you know, for the process of creating the ammunition.

Interviewer: Well, explain that how did they make sure you were supposed to do that.

McCubbin: Well, probably the president of the sorority told us we would like to have you collect tin foil was— also and grease things- that were in short supply.

Interviewer: And that would be used how?

McCubbin: They send it I guess to be the —to be processed for ammunition for making new — I don't know what they did with the foil, but they had some process to use it in the weapon in creating new weapons.

Interviewer: Did you see posters?

McCubbin: Oh yeah we had lots those Keep 'em Flying and of course Rose the Riveter which of course is the organization that belong to now. They had HUGE [gestures with hands] posters of Rosie the Riveter with her red dotted scarf because this was the first time that women got out of the house and wore pants. Up to then a woman would never be seen in pants out in public but because they had to work as a riveter up on the wing of an airplane then they had to wear slacks.

Interviewer: How often were those posters coming out? Would you see new ones pretty often?

McCubbin: Not so much. That one just became a standby, the one of her with her [makes Rosie arm motion] “We Can Do It!” And her little red bandana and primarily that was the, what do call it?

Interviewer: Popular image.

McCubbin: Yeah, the popular image of Rosie.

Interviewer: What about when you went to the movies? Was there, did you see it in the newsreel?

McCubbin: They had the Pathé news and we got pretty accurate news of the war. We knew, pretty much, new day-to-day what was going on.

Interviewer: So, did you become more conscientious more interested after the war got going?

McCubbin: Well, I think, I guess, maybe I wasn't representative of most young people. Although seeing young people today I think I must have been. That we weren't too concerned. We were sure that everything was gonna be ok. You know as far as really worrying about the situation in the world I don't remember being quite concerned about it. We just took it for granted that we were gonna win the war was gonna be over soon, everyone always thought it would be over soon, and husbands and boyfriends and all would be coming back home. We never considered the fact that some of them wouldn't be coming home.

Interviewer: Did you hear about friends, neighbors and family members that were lost?

McCubbin: Yeah, yeah. We did it. Of course, that was depressing. That was very depressing. Guess were not as serious minded as you should be, you know, to think we're losing this many and there was a lot. I read somewhere out in the museum 253,000 you know in the European theater, I think. So, there were a lot of young lives that were wasted. I guess they weren't wasted because we live in a better world we hope.

Interviewer: So, you went to Missouri University for—?

McCubbin: For 3 years, because, as I say, I got this job offer for this wonderful job at Pratt & Whitney writing up special instruction sheets for the motors that went into the airplane engines.

Interviewer: So, tell me about applying for that job.

McCubbin: Well, you know, they just, they just needed people so there wasn't much of a competition and my sister who had a car and I didn't, she was gonna drive and we had to take all our gasoline coupons to get enough gasoline to drive back and forth so we had to carpool and she was gonna apply and I said, "oh good I'll apply too" so she and I went out and applied and the next day they said "you're on, come on out Monday morning" so it was almost like that.

Interviewer: You didn't finish but you stopped attending classes.

McCubbin: Right, right.

Interviewer: And went to take this job, so tell me about Pratt & Whitney. What did they produce?

McCubbin: Well, it was primarily the Pratt & Whitney airplane engine. I'm a little bit confused about it cause my husband was a fighter pilot and he had a Pratt & Whitney, I thought, engine, in his airplane, but later on they would say, "Oh that was made by Rolls Royce," so I am a little bit confused about just what, but it was the inspection of the airplane engine to be sure we had all the right, the right parts in there and that they were adequate.

Interviewer: How large was the plant?

McCubbin: It was huge, it was quite large. I'd say two blocks long probably.

Interviewer: What was the ratio of men to women working there?

McCubbin: Oh, oh, many more women because most of men were gone. The, the—a lot of the CEOs and upper crust were men, but I would say the percentage to women was far, far over the number of men are working there.

Interviewer: And what variety of jobs were women doing there?

McCubbin: They did everything 'cause, like, I was in a office job so, you know, typing up these sheets for the inspection, but they did all varies jobs with putting together the engine, sorting parts, whatever, whatever needed to be done. We also had to wear a badge, you could not get in that plant without your badge and if you forgot it you were in trouble cause they had to know, you know, who was coming to work in this plant.

Interviewer: So, what was the attitude of most men towards women working there?

McCubbin: That's a good question, I'm thinking they didn't resent us, they didn't resent us. They acted appreciative that we were there. Most of my bosses were just great. Yep. No complaint about that.

Interviewer: Where there any African Americans working there?

McCubbin: You know, I do not remember. But of course, there were no African Americans in the Kansas City area. I didn't go to school with a single African American. I don't know why there wouldn't have been more in our area- just where people settled I guess.

Interviewer: And did you have to join a union what you had work?

McCubbin: No, no.

Interviewer: So, nonunion then.

McCubbin: Thank goodness. We might not have won the war if we had been unionized.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewer: So, tell me—how much, sort of, what was your position title?

McCubbin: I didn't really have any elegant title. It was just secretarial work; I would call it.

Interviewer: What were your duties on a typical day? Walk me through it from when you got in the morning—.

McCubbin: You had to get your badge out and you had to check through the office and be sure you had your badge and then you went up to the third floor or whatever it was and there would a lot of other women at desks all over this floor something

like probably fifty other women writing up these sheets also and typing them up to send out to the factory for the mechanics to use. You know okay, [mimics checking the sheets] “this is right, this is right” [motions with hand checking off] checking what— etc. It was a regular five hour a day job. Five you were off. As I say we carpooled so we could save on gas then I would meet my sister and the other girls that would be working and we’d all drive back which was probably a matter of 10 miles back to Kansas City to the main city, Kansas City, city anyway.

Interviewer: What kind of outfit did you wear to work?

McCubbin: You could just wear whatever you wanted to. I’m sure we all could wear pants because it was accepted then and it was much more comfortable, but I don’t remember there being any dress code as such that we had to wear. I guess if they had work out in the plant they had something they had to wear this, probably, this red bandana so their hair didn’t get caught in the engine or whatever so that probably were where the red bandana became popular for Rosie the Riveter was a matter of safety but as far as our office work there wasn’t any dress code, as such.

Interviewer: And you said they were checking off the parts, so what kind parts were being used in these planes and engines? Do you have any recollection?

McCubbin: Well, you see that part was out of my, out of my jurisdiction because we— the engineers of course would make up the things we were supposed to type up. Those sheets went to the mechanics or engineers that took them to the plant to check out, did you really put the parts in it that were supposed to go in it. Are they defective? Are they okay and so forth. So, once it got past typing it up I didn’t have much to do with it.

Interviewer: So, did you ever go out on the factory floor?

McCubbin: I don’t think I did. You know, we had a cafeteria there. It seems like you went across part of the factory to the cafeteria but as far as going out and checking out those engines I can’t remember going out there and giving them any advice.

Interviewer: So, were any of the women in that office mothers?

McCubbin: Let me see, that’s a good question. There probably were ‘cause see a lot of the guys had gone off to serve in war and they were left with children, small children

and probably a lot of them did have children and still were working at the war plant.

Interviewer: Do you know if there was any childcare available?

McCubbin: No, there was not at the plant. That was something that came later.

Interviewer: Ok so how much money did you make in that job?

McCubbin: A hundred dollars a month! I remember 'cause to me that was a lot of money a lot of money.

Interviewer: Did you save it?

McCubbin: No! I spent it, of course, and [laughs] you see the reason I remember that so well that my sorority at Missouri University they offered me sort of a scholarship. They said if you come back and help with rush week, we'll pay your tuition for your years so you can get your diploma. Well that was quite an offer and to this day, I think, well I probably should have done that but who knows.

Interviewer: Why did you turn them down?

McCubbin: Money, money! I was gonna get a hundred dollars— I was going to have to pay to pay the university—no I wasn't— I would have to buy books that sort of thing but I guess too in the back of your mind, you're a little patriotic, I mean I hate to take advantage to say I did it to win the war but that was in the back of my mind. Well I can do something to help and I can also make some money, so it was a two edge sword or whatever.

Interviewer: So, what would you spend the money on?

McCubbin: Oh, just dumb things like young people do. You know ice cream cones. I probably gave my folks some. I paid them rent 'cause we used to do that to live there while I was working.

Interviewer: But you weren't the only the only child living at home still?

McCubbin: Oh, my goodness. See my oldest my oldest sister— no, nobody else was at home because my older sister's husband was the one who went to California with the

110th engineers and I went with her, just as I said, to work for USES¹ out there. But at home my little brother was in the Navy and my other sister's husband was in the Air Force, so they were all gone, yeah, the men, the guys were all gone. So my youngest brother was in the Navy. So, there was nobody left at home.

Interviewer: So, tell me about your future husband. James McCubbin.

McCubbin: James McCubbin!

Interviewer: You said you met him in high school, hung around in the same group. How serious did you get before the war?

McCubbin: Well we were friends and it seems funny to say that now, but we went to high school together, we went to church together. We finally decided to go to Missouri University. Well, all the time I was at the university for three years I had one date with him at the, what they called the Saint Patrick's Ball. It was the big dance of the year and right after that he went off to service, to the Air Force and we weren't married until after the war then because he was gone probably 3 or 4 years.

Interviewer: But your saying you weren't particularly serious with him?

McCubbin: No, we didn't have any plans or that type of thing at all.

Interviewer: Did you communicate with him when he was overseas?

McCubbin: Yeah, we wrote letters and I wrote to all the guys 'cause they're over there and they're lonely. We wrote to all the guys so he was just one of the guys I wrote to.

Interviewer: So, you wrote to friends, to brothers—.

McCubbin: Yeah, to this group that we had. It was a youth group at church and all the girls wrote to the guys, you know. I remember at Christmas time we stuffed little socks, what do you call them, Christmas socks with candies, shaving lotion to send off to the guys. And they weren't necessarily anybody we were in love with. We were just trying to keep them from being too lonely.

Interviewer: Did you get any letters back in return?

¹ United States Employment Service

McCubbin: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: What did they say?

McCubbin: Mostly friendly, except for a couple that were more than friendly but then you know how that goes we were young. [laughs] And then he was gone longer than I thought because we didn't get married till 1947 and in the meantime, he says don't tell everybody I was a prisoner of war because that implies, I made a mistake. I said, well not necessarily, tell me you shot down nine German planes before they got you which was true, and he was just in the prison camp for four months. So, he was lucky that way.

Interviewer: Do you know which prison camp it was?

McCubbin: Oh, it was near [makes da, da, da noise] I can't say it. I should know, I can't say it. Uh—. [shakes head no]

Interviewer: Was it in Germany?

McCubbin: Oh yeah, yeah. It was in Germany. They were, they were taken on a forced march when they saw they were losing the war. They got all the prisoners out, they made—they said, "Oh they're gonna take this prison camp" so they marched all the soldiers about 200 miles south from the prison where they were to try and get them out of there before the U.S., before Patton freed the prison there.

Interviewer: How was he treated as a prisoner?

McCubbin: He said he was not violently treated like the Japanese. The Germans he said were strict and had a lot of rules, but the only thing was they were starving- there was no food so they might get two or three beans for one day, half a piece of bread. Everybody was starving but then so were the German people. He never did blame them that much. He said there is no food. So as far as being mistreated just for the sheer pleasure of being violent or vicious they weren't, but they had rules you know everything "Hurry up! Get in here! Get Out!"

Interviewer: Did you receive any letters from him while he was in the camp?

McCubbin: No, I don't think they were allowed to send letters. I don't think—see we weren't married then, so he was still just a friend and I would hear —and talk to his mom and dad, you know, they said, "well, he's missing in action" that's how it came

out you as though you thought he was dead cause that's how they reported it "Jim McCubbin P-51 pilot is missing in action in Eur—Germany over blah blah blah" So all you knew was that he was missing and his folks would get that information. I didn't. So, we didn't quite know if he was coming home or not until the war was really over.

Interviewer: And then what did you do?

McCubbin: Well, you heard—First we had, what did we have, day?

Interviewer: V.E. Day?

McCubbin: Yeah, first we had V.E. Day, but still the war wasn't over because we had to have V.P. Day, V—

Interviewer: V.J. Day?

McCubbin: V.J. Day, Victory of the Japanese. So even after we had victory in Europe, I guess at that period he was allowed to come home before the very end of the war.

Interviewer: So, when did he return home?

McCubbin: Well, that's a good question lets that would have been '40—'44,'45 does that sound logical?

Interviewer: Do you remember the soldiers returning? The feeling?

McCubbin: Oh, yeah! There was such a celebration when, you know, V.E Day everybody went down to the town square of Kansas City, there was confetti, there was — everybody was kissing everybody. It didn't matter if they knew them or not and it was just a tremendous celebration at the end of the war. Even if it was just V.E Day that was enough to celebrate 'cause they figured it wouldn't be too long till we would be out of the whole thing, hopefully.

Interviewer: So, tell me about those first few months after the war and your developing relationship with Jim McCubbin?

McCubbin: Well, we dated and like how friends would and would say "mom wants to go across down and buy some oranges, there really cheaper over there. Can you go with me? I don't wanna go over there by myself" you know, I would nod and go

over with him to buy oranges for his mom we would do things like that. Just do things. Or there would be some special dance and be like “oh there having a dance at the playmore tonight, wanna go?” And it was just a very gradual thing until— somewhere along there he said, he thought maybe he could stand me the rest of his life somehow. I don’t remember any explosion like, “Wow, this is it!” but then I said— it was just one of those things that develop over a period of time. We enjoyed being together after that, I am trying to think 47, 47 that was quite a year.

Interviewer: Were you working at another type of job at this point?

McCubbin: I worked at the newspaper as a reporter for the Kansas City Star. Have you ever heard of the Kansas City Star? It’s supposed to be the best newspaper in the middle west.

Interviewer: How did you get that job?

McCubbin: I had an uncle, I actually had an uncle who an editor there and he said well my niece is coming, gonna be moving to Kansas City. I didn’t major in journalism or anything, he said, but I think she can handle the job, so really, again, I was hired because of my uncle said I think she can do that. So, I worked, what do you call it? a financial desk, because we ran the tapes through to see what the market was doing each day, green, what green was doing and that sorta thing. It was a fun job, it was interesting.

Interviewer: How long did you work there?

McCubbin: Let’s see, I was working there when we got married. So, I worked there a couple of years.

Interviewer: So, what your first job after working in the war plant?

McCubbin: I used to work summers, you know, between school, you know, like most young people did - Sears Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, doing some dumb stocking job or stamping letters, but you know summer jobs, but yeah that was the first real job I had, at the newspaper.

Interviewer: And how did you and Jim decided to get married?

McCubbin: That’s a good question, too. It’s all kinda blurry because I’m thinking, “well, we just gradually said, “boy, I enjoy being with him—” [indicates a back and forth

conversation in mumble] He was not going with anyone else and I was not going with anyone else. He says he had gone back to Cleveland, Ohio to take a training course with the Warner & Swasey machine tools and he was in Cleveland at the time and he came home, and he says, he asked me to marry him. I said, “well Cleveland, Ohio.” He said, “Oh you will love it there.” So, since he thought I would love it there I said ok, [laughs] I will give it a whirl so we got married in 1947 and went back to Cleveland for our first year.

Interviewer: Tell me about the wedding.

McCubbin: Well, you know things—, it was not— we were not so what’s the word? deficient in everything like butter, coffee and all the rest by that time I guess things were loosening up as far as that went. So we a rather nice formal wedding at the same church we had both gone to church together there, First Baptist Church, in Kansas City our hometown and we went back there this last year for our 50th anniversary back to the same church where we were married in Kansas City. Which is now all completely African American and just charming people. They were so nice to us and the choir was excellent, and I said, “well I think this church has come up since we were here” ‘cause it was a young church at that time.

Interviewer: So, tell me about starting a family.

McCubbin: Well, we decided that we better have some children because he was 28 and I was 27 and because, you know, all that war thing in between and so we were married 4 years and we, I still didn’t have any children. And found — he says well, we better check this out. So found out my thyroid was low. We had our fir—he says, after that we had four within— we had four teenagers at the same time so they were pretty close together and that was a handful when they were little.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy bringing them up?

McCubbin: Oh yeah, we had a good time and we always went on vacation- always took for the kids tossed them in the back of the station wagon and drove to California. Can’t do it now you- gotta get ‘em in the seatbelt and all the rest. We enjoyed the children -went on a lot of camping trips ‘cause it’s cheaper. You would cook your own food out in the woods and take a hike for amusement, so it was less expensive when you had four kids- to just go camping.

Interviewer: Did you continue outside of home after working with the Kansas City Star?

McCubbin: No, I never did. I went back to Kansas City for vacation relief. People were going on a vacation they would call me and see if I can work for two weeks while someone was off, but I never worked after that. Course that was thing then, wives didn't work, but now it's changed.

Interviewer: So, you lived, you did move back to Kansas City for a time? You live in a smaller community outside city suburban community?

McCubbin: That was Prairie Village, that's where Tooken lived. Well, that was after, yeah, I'm trying to think when she Prairie Village comes in here.

Interviewer: Have I skipped too far?

McCubbin: No, no it's me, I'm trying to get my mind to go together. We moved back to Kansas City that's probably— we moved to a really nice community just a suburb of Kansas City called Lee Wood, but that was after Prairie Village, so—. Prairie Village was our first one. Housing was so limited after the war because they hadn't been building any homes that you had to draw, take a chance, draw out of a hat to see who got to buy a house so we drew a good one and we were able to buy a house in Prairie Village. Which was in the same little suburb where Tooken and her husband had bought a house. Didn't know her or anything at the time.

Interviewer: How long did you live there?

McCubbin: Oh dear, we were there till we bought, till we built this house in Lee Wood, we were there, okay, till Ken was born, [pause] He was a baby. We moved when I had the 4th one 'cause it was getting a little small for four kids so we mov— built a house, a bigger house in Lee Wood. We moved there when the baby was just, the youngest one was about two years old, now you figure it. I said I didn't excel in math, she was young.

Interviewer: So, you lived in Mexico City

McCubbin: Eleven years can you believe it!

Interviewer: For eleven years?!

McCubbin: How did we get that in there?

Interviewer: I don't know.

McCubbin: My husband was getting a little bored with his in Kansas City and his old boss that he had worked for Marley Company in Kansas City offered him job as a CEO of a plant in Mexico City. He says they've been in the red for five years and I wanna see if somebody can pull 'em out and maybe you can do it. He said well that's a challenge, so that's how come we went to Mexico.

Interviewer: Well, tell me about that.

McCubbin: So, we sold lock, stock, and barrel and moved. And he had to go off down there to, you know, find a place for us to live and learn Spanish and all the rest and he said, "Here's the house, sell the house, have a garage sale, sell all this stuff and come on down." So that was really a responsibility to think I could take care of these four kids, have a garage sale, sell the house, but we managed and with my older daughter it was quite dependable we did it and we sold everything and moved to Mexico.

Interviewer: Did you drive?

McCubbin: We bought a very bad Ford station wagon then he came back and drove us down.

Interviewer: So, do you remember those first those days and months in Mexico. How was that different?

McCubbin: Oh wow, that was quite different, that quite an adjustment to make right there. You know, here you are in a country where you don't really speak the language except Buenos Dias and much more so it was an adjustment to make and, of course, it was nice too because you had the advantage of a full time maid for the price of getting someone to clean your house one day a week you could have a full time maid live in and all the houses there were equipped with maid's quarters so when we were trying to rent a house a house I said, "oh I don't need that, I don't need a maid's quarters." They said, "oh yes you do. Everybody here has a maid." So, it was a whole new way of thinking, but it was interesting, too. We had some good maids, in fact, we didn't have any bad ones. They were all— liked them all. Of course, I would have liked to have her when my kids were all little but by then they were all in junior high and high school and they went to the American school in Mexico city and all of them learned Spanish very well- better than their parents 'cause they soaked that up.

Interviewer: What did your house look like?

McCubbin: Oh, it was beautiful we were able to buy. You mean in Mexico? Yeah, it was just a beautiful colonial type hacienda house with the handmade tiles and handmade brick. It was just beautiful, beautiful house. One of the prettier houses I think we we've had, no matter. My husband said we could sell it today, probably worth 2 million dollars. [laughs] At the time we were selling it in pesos, so anyway it was equipped with modern conveniences and of course the maid lived with us there, so it was a nice life. It was a good life.

Interviewer: What kind of friends did you make?

McCubbin: I had lots of friends there. There were lots of Americans. The house was on a golf course and there lots of houses were built around the golf course and most were either European or American couples so therefore they all spoke English so we kinda had our own little community there around the golf course, but then there were other activities too like went to the Spanish bible study, but most of the girls that went to the bible study spoke English so it was an interesting experience.

Interviewer: So, when did you move back to the United States?

McCubbin: Well, my husband retired from that company from the Marley de Mexico in Mexico City in 1980. He retired, we moved back to California. To little town just north of San Francisco in 1980 and all the kids had gone their separate ways at that time, some off to school when—so we were just the two of us by the time we moved back, by the time we retired.

Interviewer: And what did you do in those retirement years? Did you travel?

McCubbin: We traveled a lot. We did we enjoyed it. We really, really took advantage of that kick back time because we both enjoyed the traveling so that was great and with any extra money we had, take off on these cruises, you know, the tours that they have. One time we had three months around Europe, just rented a car drove all the way across and back and one time I said were having so much fun I, I'm sorry our kids aren't able to see some of these countries so I said let's take the kids even though they are married. Tell 'em we'll pay for you to go, but that doesn't include kids or spouses so we took our children and we took them too Italy, took 'em to Spain and we had a couple of week with 'em and that was a fun time we enjoyed it and they wouldn't have gotten there.

Interviewer: How did you end up moving to Georgia?

McCubbin: Because of my daughter who lives in Cedar Town.

Interviewer: So how long have you been here?

McCubbin: It's been [makes da, da, da sound] eleven years now and we have been at the Renaissance for six years in June. Six years, that's a long time. [laughs]

Interviewer: And how was it to move to the deep south? Was the transition a big transition?

McCubbin: Nah, not really. People were, were very nice very outgoing, helpful and having my daughter here with her friends and her church and her husband is choir director at their church, so it was just an easy transition. The only thing was a bad transition was going from being your boss, having your own home to depending on somebody else to take care of you, which is the case with Renaissance. You have to finally say, "ok, I can't do this all anymore." So, it has its pluses and its minuses.

Interviewer: Would you say you have a relaxed personality? Do you get along with people easily?

McCubbin: Yeah, I do. I don't have a problem. My husband might have a little problem with getting along with some people—He's always saying, [inaudible] and I say, "yeah but, considered this, he had his problems and that's why" He never stops to think why they are the way they are, but anyway we managed there. That's, you know, lots of other guys he could talk to even there were a couple in the Air Force which is nice for him cause you get two guys that are pilots and that's main what they are gonna talk about flying and their episodes in the war.

Interviewer: Well how did you get involved in the American Rosie the Riveter Association?

McCubbin: Actually, through Jane Tucker because she was head of the organization in Rome. How did you she know about me? I don't know. Have to ask Jane, probably came to Renaissance because Tooken's there and I'm there and there's another lady there who's not very active anymore who are also in it, in that era so she probably came out there talked to them.

Interviewer: And so, what sorta things do you do for the association?

McCubbin: You know they meet about, oh turns out, be once a month and we'll sometimes go over to the library and meet with the Marines they have a meeting once a month and now that they're going to have a meeting on Memorial Day I think in Ridgeberry Park and they'll have a table with all the memorabilia of World War II and they will have a whole program. They burned the flag last year, the old flag they had a ceremony for burning the old flags and establishing the news and having that this year. They made a documentary of Rosie the Riveters and it's a movie which I don't if you have seen or not. You might like to, it's interesting. It's just all the women and what they did and so forth.

Interviewer: When participating in that you're helping to preserve these memories of people working during the war serving as military—.

McCubbin: Particularly women.

Interviewer: Particularly women and do you think it's important to share these experiences?

McCubbin: I think it's very important to keep it alive because the children today in schools they hardly even know about World War II because I don't think we're teaching it too much in history class. They zip over it a little bit, "Oh yeah, by the way we went to war for a few years" and now it seems that way with my grandchildren.

Interviewer: How do you think a first-hand account like this can help bring the history to life?

McCubbin: I think it would it would seem more real to them and mean more to them. They think "wow!" Even now with my husband he's written up quite a bit of his experiences as a prisoner and also as a pilot and they like—you know, he'll read it and they are very interested in, you know, that. So, I'm thinking well that makes it more real to them that "hey, this really happened" I hope you also make more obvious that of what happened of the holocaust because that can happen again, you know, to any class of people and to see how people could become so callous to human life is just unbelievable and yet it happened so I think to, that's another thing, to keep alive the fact to be careful when your freedoms are taken away and our freedoms are being taken away, I think. It could happen to us again so it's important see how easily our freedom can be taken from you- that we fought for.

Interviewer: All right, thank you Ms. McCubbin.

McCubbin: You're certainly welcome! I've enjoyed it. I enjoyed meeting all of you. It was kinda fun to go over the old days even if some of them were not so good.