

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series
Jane Tucker interview
Conducted by James Newberry
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Transcribed by James Newberry

Full Transcript

Interviewer: Okay, this is James Newberry, and I'm here with Jane Tucker on May 19, 2015 in the Social Sciences building at Kennesaw State University. And Ms. Tucker, do you agree to this interview?

Tucker: I do.

Interviewer: Thank you. So let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

Tucker: I was born on May 27th in 1927 in Lineville-. No, no, I was born in Jasper, Alabama. But I grew up in Lineville, Alabama.

Interviewer: So you have a birthday coming up?

Tucker: Hmm?

Interviewer: You have a birthday coming up?

Tucker: I do.

Interviewer: That's right. And how old will you be?

Tucker: I'll be 88.

Interviewer: Okay, and what is your full name, your birth name?

Tucker: Lucretia Jane Tucker.

Interviewer: So tell me a little bit about your family. What were your parents' names?

Tucker: My mother's maiden name was Parker and-. Her family's name were Hanes. They-. My great-grandfather fought in the Civil War, and he pretty much was a founder of this town of Lineville after the war when it was-. It was never is still a population of a thousand or 1,200 people. But it was a large family. My mother came from a family of about seven children. And my mother and father were married for ten years before, before we were born, my sister and I. And then when the Depression came, and my father-. We were still living away from Lineville, but my father couldn't find work. And so he like a lot of other people went to Texas or to other places looking for a job. And he didn't come back. So my mother became a single mom. And she took my sister and I and we went back to Lineville to live with her parents in their home. And it was a very difficult time for everybody because of the lack of-, because of the Depression, the era that we were in. We were poor, and everybody else was. Actually my grandparents didn't

have anything. And my mother, when we went back, and she was able to get a job, which is unusual in a town that size. She worked as a telephone operator. We called 'em switchboard operators [laughs]. And that's what it was. The telephone company leased the bedroom in a private home and had the switchboard in there. And they also had a bed in there so the operators could sleep there because they worked 12 hours a day. And she made \$25.00 a month, and if people-, if the persons who had telephones couldn't pay for the service that month, then the owner of the telephone company frequently wouldn't have the money to pay the salary of the two women who worked for him. So we struggled a lot, but we didn't know that [laughs]. Everybody else-. Most everybody else in the same circumstances.

Interviewer: And you had one sister?

Tucker: One sister. Older than I.

Interviewer: Her name was?

Tucker: Betty.

Interviewer: So you were growing up and living in your grandparents' home?

Tucker: Home.

Interviewer: And so what did your grandparents do for a living?

Tucker: Well, my grandfather owned-. He had a small farm. And he had a farm, and I can just remember going there with him once or twice as a small child. I was probably two, two and a half when we went back to live with him. And then-. But when we-. The thing that I remember most was he had small, very small, store near the railroad station in town. And he just sold staples and canned things. It was really very small. And candy! I would stand on the porch in the afternoons hoping that was the day he was going to bring me a little brown sack with candy in it. I could see when he turned the corner to come up the hill whether or not he had candy. But he-. My grandmother of course never worked. So they really did not have any income. They were-. And I cannot imagine being 65 and having two little girls to take care of. And my grandmother really raised us because my mother worked so much.

Interviewer: What kind of-?

Tucker: Seven days a week.

Interviewer: And what kind of caregiver was your grandmother?

Tucker: Wonderful. Just-. I'm so blessed. I am so blessed to have had her for a grandmother. She was a-. She was a gentle, kind positive Christian lady. And she loved everybody, and she taught you to love everybody. She taught me. Somehow

my sister had the opposite- [laughs]. I don't know what happened, what triggers us to be so different. But-

Interviewer: What was your sister's personality?

Tucker: Well my sister's personality was, if you say I can't do it or I shouldn't do it, I'm gone show you that I can do it. It's kind of her personality always. And I think she had-. And we never know what happens to us when we're real young. It creates different ways that we feel. She was angry. And as she got older she became more angry. And never talked about what really her source of anger was. She had five wonderful children. Has five. They are still-. And I have enjoyed them. I've been single of course and didn't have children of my own, but I have enjoyed my niece and nephews and their children.

Interviewer: Well did you attend local schools there in Lineville?

Tucker: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the quality of those schools?

Tucker: It was very poor because there again the Depression had a tremendous effect on it. I don't recall ever going to school a full session of nine months. Most of the time we made it seven months. And in the beginning of-. In the elementary school I think we had pretty good teachers. But especially after the war the teachers who-. And a lot of the teachers didn't even have four year college degrees. They had two years. I had a ninth grade teacher who'd never been to college and had taught third grade I think in some little rural school. But it was because of the circumstances of the finances, the town didn't or was not able-. The people weren't able to support the schools. So the-. Not only were the-. There was a shortage of funds for teachers, and there was a shortage for equipment and things too. So we had-. I think our one thing that we looked forward to in life was football [laughs]. That was our entertainment for the year, and I can remember the feeling of sadness when football season was over because nothing else was gone happen good 'til the next fall. But I outgrew that. My sister never did. She's a huge Alabama fan [laughs]. I say a rabid, not avid, a rabid fan.

Interviewer: So did you have a job as a teenager?

Tucker: I did. When I was 14 I got a job in the five and dime store. Mr. A.J. Parker owned it. It was called Parker's Five and Ten Cent Store. And I worked after school and on Saturdays. And I just enjoyed earning money. I hated the sensation I guess because whenever we asked our mother for something, so often she couldn't do it. And it bothered her, but it also bothered me to ask, you know, I had a sense of guilt about having to ask for anything. I used to think if I ever can earn my own money, I'll never ask anybody for anything else. So anyway, I did work there and I made a dollar on Saturday when I worked all day. Sometimes in the afternoon I'd make fifty cents if I went after school. And it's interesting because I didn't

have a Social Security card, and the little man was a very nervous little man that owned the store. So he said, when I went to work there, he said, "Jane, if a man comes in here that you've never seen before, and he's dressed up in his Sunday suit like he's going to church, you pretend you're a customer. Don't stay behind the counter. Get out from behind the counter and start acting like you're buying something. He might be from the Social Security board." [Laughs] I mean, who was ever gone find Lineville, Alabama to check on-. But anyway that was a funny story to me even then at 14 I wondered how that was going to happen. And that was a wonderful experience. It certainly wasn't a very exciting job, but I've always liked people and I learned so much about people just, you know, working...selling things. I enjoyed it because I enjoy people.

Interviewer: So you said obviously a small town of a thousand people. How much did you know about world events and in Europe?

Tucker: Not much. Very little. We really weren't concerned too much about world events until Pearl Harbor. And that got everyone's undivided attention of course because it was such a huge thing. And I remember exactly where I was. I was 14 then and I-. We had a radio. There was no other radio and movies on Saturdays. You had the newsreel. And so my uncle and aunt who did not own a radio would come on Sunday evening to hear Walter Winchell, who was the great newscaster. And he would talk so fast. I was outside doing something in the yard outside the bedroom. And I heard all the adults start...like something horrible had happened. They were hollering. And I thought, oh, somebody's had a stroke, and I never did want to be around sick people. I was afraid to go inside and see what it was. This was the six o'clock news and it had happened earlier that day of course, the Pearl Harbor event. But we didn't hear until the six o'clock news. So I couldn't understand what that meant really. And I did when we got to school have a clear picture of part of it because all of the young men who were 18 or over-. The buses were just taking the guys coming...the one that volunteered. And they took 'em from school. That's probably where they just assembled them.

Interviewer: Immediately?

Tucker: Immediately. And so that helped me to know something had really changed in the whole world. But, you know, you could go to the theater and the movie and see the newsreel, and that was all you saw. Or the newspapers. But-.

Interviewer: So beyond those boys leaving and hearing of the announcement, how much did life change after the war was declared or after America declared war?

Tucker: Well, okay. For me it didn't change. Personally it didn't change a lot. I didn't have any brothers, and my father wasn't involved in the war. And of course my friends-. Some of my friends in school-. Most of 'em were too young. You had to be 18, and of course a lot of young men lied about their age or got their parents to

sign. So I don't remember really feeling that impact of it very much. I do remember, and this is the only time I remember ration books that we had. Food was rationed. Gas wouldn't have mattered to us if it was rationed or rubber, because we didn't have a car. So I wouldn't have paid too much attention to that. And we wore silk stockings in those days, and you could no longer buy those since I was just starting to wear high heel shoes and silk stockings. So I was very careful if I had a pair not to ruin them. But I don't really remember feeling too much change until I...1943 when we went to Savannah to-

Interviewer: Right. So what brought about that decision?

Tucker: Well, my mother was just so weary. She was weary of being in that small town and of having to be dependent upon her parents. And also she never paid the grocery store owner a total bill. She would just pay him what she could each month, and the clothing store was owned by a Jewish family. She just paid him what she could, and they accepted that. They understood our circumstances, which is a good thing about being in a community where you have community support. But she was eager to do something else, and mother had a cousin who lived in Savannah, Georgia. And she called mother so it was important. If you made a phone call, it cost a dollar. It was important, something you wouldn't use the telephone unless you, you know, it was an important need for calling. She told mother, said, "You can bring your girls and come down here, and all of you can get a job working in a shipyard, make lots of money." So mother was ready to go. In two weeks we left. I had turned 16 in May. My sister had graduated from high school in May. I was gone work for the summer and go to school in Savannah. But anyway, the most shocking-. The event that made the reality of it, the war become more clear, was-. I had traveled on the train as a child all my life. We'd go visit my relatives in Birmingham, and the train was never crowded. It was a steam engine in fact, and you'd put the windows up and the smoke would puff out. I still can see it, the train coming around with a headlight on it and the smoke puffin' up out of the top. But-. And it was an event. We loved to travel on the train. But we went to Heflin, Alabama to catch on the train to go to Savannah. And when we stepped on the train onto that coach, there wasn't a seat anywhere, and it was filled with young men in khaki uniforms. It was a troop train. Everything was a troop train. And we sat on our luggage to Atlanta, and it took about 18 hours. I don't know how long we stayed in Atlanta as a layover there. But we changed trains in Atlanta like you get on a plane now. Wherever you go, you have to go to Atlanta first. But you know, I realized that something had changed drastically. And this made it become, start becoming more real.

Interviewer: So until then did Savannah seem like a faraway place?

Tucker: Oh yeah. Yeah, I never even heard of Savannah. My mother didn't talk about it. Her cousin grew up in Lineville. Yeah, it seemed like a faraway place.

Interviewer: Well, tell me about first arriving in Savannah and what you did to set up house temporarily and more permanently.

Tucker: Well, we were fortunate. We had a cousin, my mother's sister's child, who had five little boys. And they certainly didn't have room for three more people. But they made room. And we stayed with them for three weeks. And we were also fortunate in Savannah that they had good housing. Now they had a lot of housing near the shipyard where you could get on a bus or else walk even to work. The government build 'em there. The shipyard where I worked was built for World War II ships. It had not existed before. But we lived in a nice section of Savannah. And those houses are still there the last time I went to Savannah, which was probably 12 or 15 years ago. They were duplex apartments. And I remember the worst part was the mud in the yard because they hadn't planted grass or anything. But-. And guess what, we had running water. I didn't have running water 'til I was 16, in the house that is. And that's a real convenience. So-.

Interviewer: Two bedrooms?

Tucker: Two bedrooms. My sister and I shared a room, and my mother had her own room. And we a refrigerator. We had electricity in, growing up, in the house. But we never had the money for a refrigerator. So we just used icebox where you buy the ice from the iceman. But we were blessed that we had a place to stay with someone that knew us, and that we also had good living quarters. I've heard so many stories where the living quarters for factor workers especially were just horrendous...really. All kinds of different places to live. So-. But he had a good place to live.

Interviewer: What was the first thing you did? Did you sign up for school? Did you go look for the job?

Tucker: We went for the job of course. I guess we went immediately. I have no remembrance. Really I can't remember too much about how we got to work. And I'm sure-. They had buses from downtown Savannah, but we went to work at seven. And the only thing I remember about how we traveled to work is my mother worked on-. In the area where she was, there was a man who lived in our neighborhood that had a convertible, Ford convertible [laughs]. It was about to fall apart, and the roof leaked when it rained. So my sister and I, being silly teenagers, we opened the umbrella in the backseat like he couldn't see it and laughed the whole way to work. But anyway, we rode with this man, you know, to work. We-. Your question-. Obviously I lost my train of thought. I chased a rabbit now.

Interviewer: How did you go to apply for the job?

Tucker: Yeah, we went to apply for the job, and we waited for hours to be called for an interview. And so when they-. When the man was interviewing us, telling us we

could have the job, he said, “Your starting pay while you’re in training...” And they trained us for six weeks in a welding school that they had owned by the shipbuilding company. He said, “Your starting pay will be \$1.20 an hour.” Can you believe it? And I said, “I been making a dollar a day.” So I thought I was going to be wealthy before the year was over, I guess. Anyway, that was-. The school was interesting. I can remember just little bits of it. And the thing that puzzles me so is I have no memory, no sense of how I felt the first time I walked into the shipyard. And they had cranes in there that were three stories tall. And they were swinging these huge sheets of metal all over the place and picking up parts of the ship that’d been welded and built down on the yard and moving it. I don’t remember how stunned I must’ve been. I don’t know. I just don’t remember thinking-. And noise! Oh, it was horribly noisy.

Interviewer: Do you remember the new type of clothes you were wearing?

Tucker: Yeah, I do. We wore-. We’d never worn pants. Women did not wear pants. Maybe they did in California and New York City, but not in Lineville, Alabama. And one of my friends, who was a Rosie, applied for a job and she got it, and she went home. She said, “Mama!” She lived in South Georgia. “They’re going to make me wear pants to work! I don’t want to do that.” Well, her job was to climb up on the plane. It was a fighter pilot that we were-. And they were training British pilots before we got into the war. This was in ’39. But she said, “They’re going to make me wear pants. Can I do that?” “Yeah, you can do it ‘cause it’s our only source of income.” So anyway, we did wear pants and they were thick pants. We wore boots just below our knees with safety toes and long sleeve shirts with button up necks. And if you were welding-. We were rod welders, and the fire of course-. The sparks would fall back on you a lot of times. You couldn’t get out of the way of them, so you had to wear a leather jacket. And they supplied those. We supplied our other clothes. So it was-. And Savannah is a very hot city. Whew! And we worked in the sun all day long. Sometimes we were inside, you know, a room. And that’s actually what we were doing. We were welding the building-. It was prefabricated – the keels. All the things were brought in and put together, and we welded them together. And I guess one of the most painful injuries, and it wasn’t critical at all. I was-. When you weld with a rod, it forms a slag on the seam, on the welding thing, and you have to chip it off. And some places they had people employed just as chippers, but I remember-. Only reason I remember doing it, was a piece of that slag the size of my thumbnail went down in my boot and it was red hot. And I couldn’t get it unlaced fast, you know. That was not a big thing because a lot of people were critically injured. And I don’t think Americans realize the cost of lives for defense workers. I read in one book-. And of course I don’t know if it was accurate or not because everything that’s written in books about things is not always true. But it said 34,000 defense workers had died by 1944. So it was dangerous work. It was, especially shipbuilding. Some of the jobs were not so dangerous.

Interviewer: So describe sort of a typical work shift for you.

Tucker: Well, a typical shift was to be at work at seven and get off at-. We worked ten hours. That would be four. And we had 30 minutes for lunch and I think the 15 minute break in the morning and afternoon came during World War II. I haven't ever read that. In my mind I think that because if you work such long hours, you needed to take a break. And so that's what we did. But we just had a half hour for lunch. And we worked six days a week almost every week and sometimes seven days. So it was a lot of long hours.

Interviewer: And you were a rod welder?

Tucker: I was a rod welder.

Interviewer: Okay, so could you explain that in a little more detail as if I'm completely ignorant?

Tucker: Yeah, right. It has-. When you weld with a rod, it's attached to a machine, a large machine that controls the temperature. And it wasn't portable in those days. I'm sure they have different things now. But that was one of my greatest frustrations with being a welder. You had to get the temperature on the machine set exactly right. If it were too hot it'd burn a hole in the metal. If it's too cold it'd stick [laughs], so you couldn't make a seam. You know, you just keep it-. You had to keep the metal. The metal was-. The equipment was in a-. It was in a-. The rod was in a handle like. And that where the heat, the electricity came from. And it would melt the rod. And you had to keep a steady flow to keep that, to make the seam strong, you know. And they said women made better welders than men because, especially if they like to sew. Well, I didn't like to sew, but I hope I did weld better than I sewed because that was never something I liked to do.

Interviewer: Because it's precise work.

Tucker: It was precise. Yeah, it was very-. You know, have you ever noticed on athletic equipment when you're working out at the gym, it's welded together. And it has those little-. So it's precise and sometimes in very close places. One thing that they didn't-. The hardest place I guess that I worked and they did not make women work were in the inner bottoms of the ship. That was where all the pipes and all the equipment-. I showed you a picture of it, but it was upside down. You had holes like this going through the ship. And you just have to get down on those pipes and shimmy back there to wherever, however far back or down you were going into the ship. Well, when the war ended a lot of the people had already quit because they knew it was going to-. The shipyard was gone close. I had stayed out of high school the two and a half years while, and worked instead of going back to school while I was in Savannah. So I wasn't in a hurry to leave. And I was saving my money because I knew I was going to need it to get my last year of high school. So I worked. My sister and mother had both quit, but I worked in

those inner bottoms. And it was-. It was very treacherous. It really was. You know, people like to scare you and tell stories, and they'd talk about how you'd be sexually molested back in the back when you got way back there. But the worst-. I wasn't so worried about that as I was about the smoke and the breathing. Then you'd get all the way back, and you'd find out your machine wasn't gone work the right way. So you'd have to slither back out again [laughs]. It was-. That was the hardest part.

Interviewer: And you continued to do that you're saying after the war?

Tucker: Yeah, for let's see, I probably just did it for six or eight weeks. That was about all.

Interviewer: So when you were a rod welder during the war, how close were you to other workers on the floor? Were you talking to them?

Tucker: Well, pretty close. Yeah, you could talk to them sometimes. We were-. And you were-. You'd sometimes be in the same section, but not as close as we are probably in this room together, you know. And you wouldn't-. I can't remember that too much. I remember when we'd get inside the rooms that there probably would not be anybody but maybe one other person on the opposite side. And one of the most painful things that happened to welders still happens today. Of course wore the heavy shields with the glasses that protected your eyes from the rays of the welding. And you were cautioned all the time. And they-. You'd have your shield inspected to be sure you didn't have a leak in the glass or around the opening, the view box. So if you-. If you had a leak in the shield or somebody welded over here, and you took your shield off and you weren't aware they were close to you, then you'd get a burn. I-. It has a name. I can't get it to come out, but anyway. You'd get your eyes would get a burn. And it's a funny, a humorous story. I had a date with this young man. I don't think I ever saw him again and probably had never seen him before, but I'm sure I didn't see him again. But we went to the movie on the bus. And you wouldn't know that you'd had a flash burn until all of a sudden the tears would start pouring. Well, it was a funny movie. There was nothing in it sad to make you cry. And all of a sudden the tears just started pouring off my cheeks. Well, it was okay in the movie 'cause it was dark, but when we got on the bus and had to go home on the bus with all these other people, they kept looking at that young man like, what have you done to that [laughs] to that sweet young thing? And I, you know, and it hurt. Oh, it hurt so bad. And the only thing you could do to get relief. It felt like you had taken sand from the beach and just rubbed it in your eyes as hard as you could rub a handful. But the only thing you could do was to grate a potato and just pack it on each eye. And it would give you some relief. And it's interesting, a few years ago I was telling this young man I had been a welder. He was a welder. And he didn't believe a woman had been a welder either, but-. I said how do you, what do you do to treat a flash burn now when you-. He said, "You grate a potato and put on your eyes!" So they haven't made any improvement [laughs]. But that just

happened to me once. I really don't remember how it happened but that was-. There were so many things about-. And I don't think we got a-. I know I didn't, and I don't know if anybody else did any sense, any real sense of, had a sense-. We went to work and you were-. Most people that you talked to – women – went to work because of the financial need. They were just like my mother. They were tired of not having anything. And of course World War II was the beginning of the end of the Great Depression. I read somewhere not too long ago that the Great Depression didn't end-. Well, I shouldn't have started that because right now I can't remember. But years later that it really ended.

Interviewer: Fully.

Tucker: Fully. But anyway. That's-.

Interviewer: Well, I want to talk a little bit, because I know your mother and your sister were also working these jobs. Similar jobs.

Tucker: Right.

Interviewer: What was your sister doing?

Tucker: She was welding. And she worked up on the way where you assemble the ship...on the, right on the water. We built the ship out on the ground in front of the ways. There were six ways at the shipyard where I worked. And you had to volunteer to go out there if you were a female. And so she volunteered. She thought that'd be more interesting, I guess so. And twice she had-. She almost lost her fingers. She told, has written her story, but they were bringing a huge bulkhead of steel. And it came from around behind her, and they were getting ready to put it on the side of the ship. And she was leaning over the ship trying to get 'em to set her machine right. And, you know, somebody screamed at her, and she got her hand out of the way just in time to keep that thing from going down on her fingers. But it was a lot more danger. See, I don't remember people getting hurt. But she remembers. She said, "Oh, people died. They had accidents that people died from where I worked." And I don't remember that.

Interviewer: And she also nearly fell.

Tucker: Yeah, on-. She was on the, working on the deck and probably somebody moved a cover off of, a seal cover off of a-. Anyway, she didn't-. It wasn't there and she turned around. And she almost fell from the top deck down into the ship, which would have been probably disastrous. I don't know if it would've been fatal. You never know, but she would've been hurt bad because everything on a ship is steel. And she said the ambulances were coming all the time. Another thing I can't believe I had-. I'm not a curious person in many ways [laughs]. I never went to see a ship launched. I cannot believe that. And they would let us. I can remember them saying, "You're free to take the time to go over there. They're having a launching today." And Betty saw them...that happen. Because she worked on the

way. But it always, I guess, seemed like too much trouble. I don't know I didn't go [laughs].

Interviewer: Maybe you were tired from working...

Tucker: I don't know [laughs].

Interviewer: All day.

Tucker: It would've been a break from working. But I didn't see one launched and it's. We built 88 ships in four years in Savannah. And the reason history is so important, people in Savannah, Georgia, don't even know that shipyard was there. I mentioned a book to you, *Working on the Swing Shift*. It was written by Tony Cope. He wrote it about Southeastern Shipyard where I worked. And he was a little boy nine years old. He said, "I lived close enough to the shipyard that when I went to bed at night, I could see the lights and I could hear the whistle blow for the change of shifts. And I could hear the noise of the shipyard." But he said it occurred to him when he was about 55, I guess, 55, that people in Savannah rode by there all the time and never even knew it existed. And it employed 45,000 people during World War-. In those four years. Plus it contributed immensely to the, to winning the war. So it's too bad how people let history go. And so I'm glad. And he interviewed a lot of people who worked there. I wish I had known him. I would've gone to Savannah to tell my story. But I didn't know about the book until later.

Interviewer: Well, what about your mother? What did she do?

Tucker: Well, my mother welded and she worked like I did on the yard. And it's very interesting. I wrote my story and my sister wrote her story. The American Rosie the Riveter Association has four books that have been published by them and you know for them, and are for sale about women who worked in World War II. And I keep trying to write my mother's story, and I think, "I didn't even talk to my mother [laughs]." That's terrible, but you know, when you're a teenager...Of course I talked to her, but I wasn't interested in how she felt. I wasn't interested in how-. And I know she was lonely because she was 44, and she certainly didn't want to go dancing at the USO with those good-looking Air Force men that we liked to entertain. So I-. She was happy I'm sure to be able-. And the first thing we did was-. And she called the person who owned the grocery store and the person who owned the dry goods store. That's what we called them in those days. She called 'em before she left home. And I don't know that this happens often. I guess it does but people paid their bills and they were honest. But she called and she told them that she would be sending them money, that she was leaving, that she was moving, but she was not going to forget what she owed them. And I find it very interesting because in a small town-. And this is a piece of history in America, the Jewish immigrant so often settled in small towns and most often owned a clothing store. And this couple, they were the only Jewish family in that

area. And we didn't know anybody out of the county unless it was an aunt or uncle somewhere, but they were the only Jewish people in that town. And people talked about them. Little towns, I never wanted to live in a small town again after I got out of Lineville, because they're-. People are so, have so little to think about that they just...are critical, I guess is the thing. And if they don't-. If you don't think like they think then they think something's odd [laughs]. You know. And they-. One thing I remember growing up about Jewish people that people said is they're just greedy. All they want is money. Well guess what Mr. Miller told my mother when she called him. He said, "Ms. Iris, you've already paid me enough money. You don't owe me anything." Well, she paid him anyway because she felt like she owed him. But see, he was a lot more generous than the other guy. So, and I never have forgotten that. But we did that and after that we just divided up our expenses with our money and we bought war bonds. The government, the only way they had money to build equipment like the things that we had to do to fight, was with war bond money. So we bought-. I bought a \$25 war bond. I think every two weeks was pay day. And I didn't use any of that money until I went back home to go to school. So I learned a lesson about saving and the advantages of saving your money, not just spending it. Of course we didn't have much time to spend money. We worked ten hours a week, six days a week. I mean ten hours a day.

Interviewer: Well, I was going to ask. So on a regular day when you heard that bell ring, how did you feel to get off work?

Tucker: I don't remember [laughs]. Really I'm sure I felt glad. The first thing I probably wanted to do was take off those warm hot clothes. But it was cold in the wintertime too on that river. But we didn't have as much cold as we did hot. And I felt eager to get home because we always had dates to go dancing or to go to the USO. We could go downtown to the USO, and the USO bus would take us out to the Hunter Air Base, which was B-17s. And that was a bomber, and they went to Europe. They-. It was a jump off for those guys. They were there six weeks, and some of 'em of course a lot of them never came back. The gunners on those planes were just-. They'd go out with a crew of 14, I think. I wrote this down when I visited an Air Force museum outside of Savannah. And they'd come back with eight or ten because they didn't have any protection to start with. We didn't have enough fighter planes. And I-. Maybe that's one of the-. There are a lot of reasons why we make choices in our lives. And I chose to stay single because of a lot of other reasons. But I also think that at that age-. And you read stories all the time, and it still happens. But the war caused it to happen more often. Romances lasted three weeks and then they'd get married, you know. I was just gone protect my heart at the time, because I thought I'm not gone get serious with this guy even though I like him a lot. Because I probably never see him again. I know I said that a lot of times to myself. That's probably a part of the picture of making the choice to be single. But it was a-. And one thing I think that was such a

wonderful help to me-. My grandfather was seven years old during the Civil War, and when he said, "Damn Yankee," he meant it. Because he remembered the Reconstruction days. I don't remember him ever talking about it. I wish I'd asked him questions, but I didn't, you know as a kid I didn't think about it. But he didn't like Yankees. And so we met guys. This is the way the social structure was in this country. We lived in small towns. We didn't meet people from Georgia much or Tennessee, much less from a large city. I remember my aunt marrying a guy from Connecticut. And they came to visit us. And I couldn't understand one word he said [laughs]. Because he talked like a Yankee. But anyway, meeting those guys and seeing that they were wonderful, kind people just like all of us. All people are the same. That's a lesson I learned. Well then when I-. I didn't know it at the time, but when I graduated from high school I went to dental hygiene school. And I went to Chicago to school. And I would have been terrified of Yankees if I hadn't already known some [laughs], and found out that they were just like me. So you know, that was a wonderful lesson. It doesn't matter how, what's going on in our lives, there's always something of value that we learn that we don't ever forget.

Interviewer: So working in Savannah, working in the shipyards and meeting servicemen sort of was an eye-opening experience?

Tucker: Yes. Right. And meeting other people, you know from other places, at work.

Interviewer: And you said there were also men working in the shipyards, and so what was the sort of ratio of men to women...about?

Tucker: About. Well, I would say about 60 percent or 50 percent. 60 percent were women.

Interviewer: How did many of the men view women working those jobs?

Tucker: I've heard horror stories about that in other places. But maybe it was because I was so young. I don't know, but I was never shunned or mistreated. Of course men liked-. They're always boys. Men never grow up. They always liked to play jokes like sending you off for some tool that doesn't exist [laughs]. But I didn't think that was being cruel. But I've heard some really bad stories about how women were treated because the men didn't, did not want them working where they did. But I didn't experience that so I can't tell you. In fact I found 'em all to be very kind and protective and helpful.

Interviewer: And you had a leaderman. And what is that?

Tucker: A leaderman would be-. Well, I guess he'd be similar to a supervisor. He was in charge. And he was a trained welder and probably had been a shipbuilder somewhere in his experience. And then over maybe six or eight of what we called the slabs – and they were numbered – there would be a quartermen. You know, he would oversee the whole job to see that it was moving along correctly. But the man that was my immediate supervisor was, he was great. He was a great man

and very kind. And he wasn't-. He was probably in his forties. And a number of the people who worked-. Well, of course some of them were deferred because of the job. I mean they had to have people who knew how to build ships because they couldn't-. But it's a miracle when you think about people had-. I never had seen-. It wouldn't matter about this, but I didn't have any idea about constructing anything. I'd never seen a bolt or ocean [laughs] or anything where I grew up. But for us to be able to go and build ships. And not just us but for people in all of the jobs. And women got on buses by themselves and trains and went across the country, and they'd never been anywhere. But they did it. Well, when you're young I just think you have some sense of adventure and want to do, but we all wanted to help win the war. And I mentioned earlier that we did it primarily at the time that we went because of the financial need. But it didn't take us long to understand that we were helping in a great cause. And I think one of the reasons-. And I have this-. I read this quote from the American Rosie the Riveter Park that's in Richmond, California. And it prompted me to start telling my story. It said, "You must tell your children, putting modesty aside that without us, without the women, there would have been no spring of 1945." And I thought, I didn't know that. And I just read that ten years ago. Or twelve.

Interviewer: That's powerful.

Tucker: Yeah. I didn't know that. And you know, and I understand this. Young people, the huge majority of them-. And when I say young I'm talking about up to 50 years of age, 40 or 50. But we're so busy-. You're so busy living your own lives and taking care of the daily needs, that you forget about-. You know, you forget about what you did and what you were doing. And for the veterans, of course a lot of times it's more, too painful to even try to talk about it. Because they don't think anybody understands what they're saying. And they don't. Of course we don't understand anything that we haven't experienced.

Interviewer: Well, let's-. Let's go back to this period in Savannah. And so you're working. Did you work alongside African Americans in the shipyards?

Tucker: No. There were some there, but we didn't work alongside of 'em. That was the South.

Interviewer: So that remained even in these sorts of federal corporations?

Tucker: Right. It wouldn't have been true in Detroit because there was already an exodus of Afro-Americans to Detroit to work in automobile places. But they did employ them, but they just didn't work alongside still. And you know, I just can't imagine, but when you grow up with circumstances like water fountains that say-. Well, we didn't have water fountains in Lineville so I didn't ever encounter that or restrooms, things with marks on them for whites or for blacks. It's-. I just didn't think about that much. I mean it seemed like a normal thing until I moved to Savannah. And then I got the picture because I began to see the difference. I

could see the black only, the white only, the people going to the back of the bus to sit.

Interviewer: And was the work unionized?

Tucker: Yes, and we had a strike. And I said I will never work in a place again where I have to join a union. The machinists struck but that meant nobody else could work. And it was for more money. And the Savannah newspaper headline said, "Workers strike at Southeastern Shipbuilding for more money while their sons and fathers are dying on the front." I mean, you know, it was really a bad feeling. And it didn't last but a week or two. And I don't know how much my pay was when I, but I think I made-. See I was never a, never kept things, saved things. A lot of women have their last paycheck. The stub, whatever. But I think it was about two-. Seems like they were striking for \$2.40 an hour.

Interviewer: So it shut the entire thing down?

Tucker: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you did not feel good about that?

Tucker: No, I did not feel good about that.

Interviewer: Because you're faced with those headlines.

Tucker: Well I wouldn't have felt good about it any-. I didn't feel good about it anyway. You don't want anybody to tell you you can't go to work. I had no understanding about what the union was about. I just knew I had to pay dues, and they could tell me what I could and could not do. And I did not like that...when they said I couldn't go in that shipyard and work. Another frustration about that job-. This is just a petty little thing, but it was very frustrating was the weather was always such a factor. Because we couldn't work if it rained. But if you didn't go clock in and stayed home because it's pouring down rain. And we didn't know about the forecast either then see, so we couldn't check that very well. But you'd have to go to work or else if you worked over 40 hours they wouldn't give you time and a half if you had missed a day so. And they had a hard time getting – I didn't know this even until I read that book – but the workers were-. A lot of 'em just didn't show up to work. And, well a lot of 'em were rejected by the Army. And they hired old people. One family came from somewhere up east, there were 17 in one family that came to work at the shipyard where I worked. They just hired just about whoever would take a job. And then they had to encourage 'em to come to work. But that wasn't in my, wasn't a problem for me. My mother gave me some-. You all don't know about castor oil [laughs], but one morning I didn't want to get out of bed, so I pretended I was sick. And she gave me some castor oil and a glass of orange juice, and I wasn't sick anymore. I was sick from that, but I never played that trick again. I mean we were taught if you're supposed to be

somewhere, you're supposed to be somewhere. You can't call up and say I'm not coming.

Interviewer: Well, so in your uniform and getting back on the bus to go home, how did the locals in Savannah react to y'all?

Tucker: They shunned us very much, the locals. But that was okay. But yeah, Savannah is a very-. In my era they called it blue-blooded, you know. They were very snobbish and they had their groups. But they thought it was terrible for women to wear pants. And women did smoke on the street. I would never-. I did smoke, but I never would've smoked on the street or on the bus or in public. But we made some, you know, we-. Women did, a lot of the women, some of them made, formed some bad opinions and images. But yeah, they were-. We felt shunned. It was a little bit like going away to college. You had-. A lot of the people who came to work in the shipyard came from small towns all around Savannah, and they commuted. But you had a good group of friends, and I don't-. I never had a single friend that was a local Savannahian. I hadn't thought of that until just now, but I don't remember ever having a friend.

Interviewer: So you said you would be entertained at the USO, and you had boyfriends who were servicemen and would go to the movie. So it sounds like there was entertainment. There was some spirit of fun even though a war's going on.

Tucker: Oh yes.

Interviewer: So the mood, what was the general mood?

Tucker: Well the general mood was to do-. And that was true wherever you were, in Rome, Georgia. I'm sure it was true here in Kennesaw. Wherever you lived the general mood was do whatever you can for the serviceman. And if they were stationed like in Atlanta at Fort Benning.¹ They would go to Rome when they had the weekend off, anywhere to get away from the Army base and the atmosphere of being in the Army. And so when they went to the small towns, people would invite 'em home. If they went to church, they'd take 'em home with 'em to eat. We had canteens. A lot of places had canteens, and they would have cookies and coffee and things for 'em to drink. So, yeah, everybody, I think, everybody that I knew tried to do what they could to care for the servicemen while they were being trained and before they went overseas. And one of the interesting stories-. And this is another lesson, my grandmother always said you can't judge a book by a cover. And young people have a hard time learning that. My neighbor came over one afternoon and asked my sister and I if we were busy. She said, "My boyfriend, Joe, just called and he's got a couple of friends, he wants to bring 'em. Can you all go to eat and to dance?" So we didn't have anything to do. My sister instead of saying yes, said, "I bid the tall one [laughs]." I never was quick enough

¹ Fort Benning is a United States Army base in Columbus, Georgia.

for her or to get ahead of her. So they came. It was summertime I know because the room was full of sunlight. Not only was the young man short, and I mean real short like five feet. He took off his flight cap and those flight caps made 'em so handsome. We just loved to date the Air Force men. But when he took his off, there was not one hair on his head. And there was no Yul Brynner movie out then [laughs]. Nobody had seen baldheaded men. Well it's hard, you know, silly to teenagers. I never looked at either one, my sister or my neighbor. I just looked at him and kept talking. Well we went to this place to eat and dance. And when we got up to dance – everybody on the dance floor [eyes-turning motion] – he was right here on me. And everybody-. You could see people, you know, watching us. I probably had on high heels. But he was there six weeks and every leave, every free time that he had off, he came to see me. We went to the movie. We just-. We really had a good time together. And he lost his hair because he had already flown every-. At first they had to fly like 30 missions before they got leave. And that's when he lost his hair. The stress of dropping bombs on people below and, you know, we don't think about that. We just think about are we winning the war. Anyway, he was going back to do more, do more missions. But I think the-. And he was just a wonderful person. And I just will always be so frustrated at myself that I did not write down his name or anyone else's name that I met, that I really cared for and would like to have-. See this was-. I thought, well I'll never another opportunity to see, to hear from him again. I could go online now and find out if they were alive. But you the names. And I tell young people when I talk to groups of students, I say write down things that are important to you, that you think you won't forget. Because you will forget 'em.

Interviewer: So, you remember the end of the war, and where were you exactly?

Tucker: I was in the inner bottoms of that ship. And I don't remember any celebration except the whistles started blowing and it wasn't time for the shift to end. And we all came out, but we were scattered. There were not much of a-. It was a skeleton crew there. But people who were in cities, you know, wherever there was a group, it was a tremendous celebration.

Interviewer: Did it go on for several days?

Tucker: I don't remember that. I don't really-.

Interviewer: So you said you continued to work about six weeks, make a little more money.

Tucker: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: And then was it that point when you planned to finish your last year of school?

Tucker: I did. And of course everybody in the family said, "Oh, you're making a terrible mistake." I remember how think, I am not dropping out of school forever! You know, I say, "I'm going back to school, but I'm going to work during the war." And I could've gone-. I went to register to go to school in Savannah. And they

said, “Well, we have your transcripts here, and you finished the junior year in high school, but you haven’t had any language, you haven’t had any math, and you haven’t had any science. You can-. We will let you register and start to school, but it’s gone take you two years to do that.” And so I said I think I’ll work. And everybody else was working. There were, you know-. People were in the Army. Everybody’s life was disrupted. It didn’t seem like a big problem to me.

Interviewer: That was before.

Tucker: Hmm?

Interviewer: That was in ’43.

Tucker: That was in ’43. And now of course I would’ve certainly been wiser to have gone to school because college would’ve been a lot easier if I’d had that extra background from high school. But anyway, it was not a bad choice. And thousands and thousands of Americans stayed out of school and postponed everything until the war was over.

Interviewer: So where did you complete that final year?

Tucker: I went back to Lineville and completed it. And the reason we didn’t have anything of course there again was because of the Depression. But I went back and I lived with my aunt and went to school. And I didn’t really think I’d-. Teachers have a way of always telling you, you know, if you don’t-. You better make-. You better learn that Algebra or you won’t get in college. Well, I’d always think, I’m not going to college. I don’t have any money. No way we can go to college. You know, I just didn’t have that as a goal in my mind. And there were not all the opportunities that you have, that young people have now. So, but when I graduated from high school, my father’s oldest sister talked to my father and said, “You know, you haven’t been a part of your child’s life very much, and she obviously wants to do something with her life. Would you be willing to finance her going to college?” And he did that, so I went to, well I went to a liberal arts school just for a year because when I applied for dental hygiene school, which is what I wanted to do – that’s a two year course – the class was filled. A lot of the schools, dental schools closed even during World War II because they didn’t have-. Everybody had gone off to fight in the war. They didn’t have the staff, the teachers, the instructors that they needed. But anyway, I did go to college. From Lineville I went to the liberal arts school for a year, and then I went to Chicago to Northwestern to dental hygiene school.

Interviewer: Was that the first contact you’d had with your father?

Tucker: No.

Interviewer: So there had been some...

Tucker: He'd-. We'd had contact. He just wasn't consistent at all in the contacts. We'd visit him some when we were small, and there was a lot of anger with my mother especially. And I understand that. But so we-. But anyway, he wasn't consistent at all in supporting us financially, and so, but we visited him when we were children. We'd go visit him for a week. Sometimes. Not often, but sometimes. But you don't bond with people much. But anyway, he did-. He was great to do that and we became closer together because I spent more time with him.

Interviewer: So moving to Savannah at 15 is one thing. But moving to Chicago, what was that like?

Tucker: It was pretty scary [laughs] when I got there anyway. I was-. And the interesting thing in contrast, my father went with me, and he always-. He was a salesperson, sales representative. He always stayed at the best hotels, so we stayed at the Hilton hotel in Chicago on Michigan Boulevard. I want forget it. We were gone-. The students lived at the Y.M.C.-, Y.W.C.A., excuse me. We wouldn't live at the M.C.A. [laughs]. So we lived at Y.W.C.A. When I got to that room and it was on the 17th floor of the building, and I didn't have-. I had requested a roommate. I thought it was gone be like the first year of college at liberal arts school. There were a thousand women there, and about ten or twelve of us were hygienists. Anyway, it was a desolate cold October day, and all I could see was downtown Chicago and it was huge. And I've never forgotten. It was a Afro-American man brought my luggage up, and bout-. I didn't want my father to see me cry. I was 20 years old so I kept suppressing the crying. By the time I got on the elevator I was making these horrible gulping sounds so [laughs]...and I got off and got to the room, and by the time this man got there with my luggage – I can still see him – he'd say, "Miss, please don't cry [laughs]. Don't cry. It's gone be alright." So tried to be so comforting. And I made a friend. She was on the elevator, a student. She was older than I was, and she told me on the elevator, she said, "I'm going-. As soon as I can, I'm coming up to your room to visit with you." And she did. And she's 95 now. Yes, and I still talk to her occasionally. She's still alive, but she slept in a bed with me. It wasn't a twin bed. It was about as-. It was kind of like a cot that was the bed in the room. But she knew how homesick. And I was never homesick again. Those were the last tears I shed, which is another lesson. You just have to have a friend.

Interviewer: And the dental hygiene college was in the city of Chicago, not in Evanston?

Tucker: Right, not in Evanston. All of the professional schools-. We were attach-. We were connected to the dental school, and all the professional schools are downtown in Chicago, not out at Evanston.

Interviewer: So how long was the program?

Tucker: Two years.

Interviewer: And what did you do sort of for amusement or recreation, entertainment in Chicago?

Tucker: Well I discovered pizza for one thing [laughs].

Interviewer: Deep dish?

Tucker: Pizza, never seen pizza of any kind in the South. But we had, you know. We just did what college kids do. And we-. I enjoyed the city, and the gir-. My friends enjoyed my excitement over snow. I got on the elevator one night, and it hadn't snowed in Chicago. Growing up in Alabama I was always excited about snow, 'cause we didn't have to go to school, was the main reason I guess I was excited about it. So anyway, this lady got on the elevator. She had on a coat with a fur collar, and I saw something on the collar. I said, "What is that?" And she said, "It's snowing [laughs]." I got so excited. And they-. My friends, my roommates, and the friends at dental hygiene school never let me forget that first night I made them put their coats on over their pajamas and go outside with me to see the snow. But it didn't-. That excitement didn't last too long because when it snows in Chicago, nothing changes. You've got to get to class on time. And Chicago's a wonderful city, so we had a-. I enjoyed seeing the city. I enjoyed visiting with-. I went home with some of my classmates to visit one in Michigan, one in Indiana. Just-. It was a just a good time. I really loved that part-. And I liked being what I, learning to do what I did for 55 years. And that was being a dental hygienist.

Interviewer: Well you said that you had sort of resolved not to form too lasting attachments to young men while you were working in Savannah. So did you maintain that policy in Chicago?

Tucker: No. No, and I didn't start maintaining it really-. I guess having been a child with single parents and a divorce and all the things that go into that...um, that had a big influence. And my sister had two children by her first husband and they were divorced. And I got, could see the children going through what we had. And I remember making a conscious decision: I don't want to get married and have children. I don't want them to be caught up in this. So I just kind of-. But I didn't actually stop going, you know, having dates and going out with guys and doing things. But I just decided I really didn't think it was right for me to be married. And so I-. And that-. I continued to feel that way, and I believe strongly in God's leadership in my life. And I think he knew that was what I needed even though marriage is the normal pattern. But I can't tell you how many children I've had in my lifetime that were other people's children that I loved. And they needed somebody extra. Children-. I have one Guatemalan family, there were seven children in Rome. And they don't have grandparents. They never saw their grandparents. They have 'em, but they're back in their own country. And they can't-. You know, they don't ever get to be with them. And so I've nurtured other people's children and been blessed by that. And I haven't had the terrifying

responsibility of [laughs] clothing them and teaching ‘em all the things they have to learn. But yeah, I think I did what was right, what was best for me. And I haven’t regretted it.

Interviewer: So you completed your education in Chicago in two years, and then where did you start work?

Tucker: Atlanta. And I worked in Atlanta for seven years.

Interviewer: And then on to Jacksonville.

Tucker: Then I went to Jacksonville.

Interviewer: And when did you arrive in Rome?

Tucker: 1968. July 1st.

Interviewer: And what was the-? What dentist did you-?

Tucker: I worked for-. My cousin, my first cousin married a dental student. She was a dental hygiene student at U.T. So she was married to a dentist. And he lived in Rome, and he told me when he got his-, when he got out of the service, and got his practice started, he said, “When I get my practice built up, I want you to come to work for me.” And I thought, I don’t believe I want to go to work for family. You know that was another thing out of the back, out of my background, that people didn’t think it was a good idea to work with your family. I don’t [know] where it came from exactly. But anyway, that happened and I did go to work for him. And it was wonderful. It really-. They are really-. He really was a wonderful person to work for. And my cousin and I are like sisters and-. So it-.

Interviewer: And you worked there-.

Tucker: 35 years.

Interviewer: 35 years. So you retired in ’03.

Tucker: Mmhmm [yes].

Interviewer: Okay, 2003.

Tucker: Right.

Interviewer: Okay, so um, tell me about the American Rosie the Riveter Association.

Tucker: Um, it’s made up of women who worked in-, during World War II. And the association was formed of course with the purpose to help educate people to know what women did during World War II. And to promote, to help people understand not just what we did for the war effort but what it-, how it changed the social issues of our lives. And how women came to see that they could count for something other than just being housewives. And that’s an important thing. I’d

never want to minimize the importance of being a mother and a housewife. But it just opened-. We like to stress that and we also like to help people understand that...that we can do it! That's what our icon says. Women can do, and still how many women in the world know that?

Interviewer: Well, you said in your early work, sort of getting other Rosies involved, you worked with the *Rome News Tribune*?

Tucker: Mmhmm [yes].

Interviewer: And how did you advertise or recruit?

Tucker: Did I show you that picture? I didn't, did I?

Interviewer: I don't think so.

Tucker: I went to the-, a national meeting of the American Rosie the Riveter Association in Kno-, in Nashville [looking through album]. I haven't attended many of them. I'm not-. But anyway, when I came back-. I don't have it [newspaper article]. It's in the other thing. When I came back I called the *Rome News Tribune* and spoke to this young man. And I told him a little about who the women-, who Rosie the Riveters were. It's amazing how many people don't know anything about it. But he said-. I said, "Would you like to do a story?" He said, "Yes, I would." So I went down, and he made the best picture I've ever had made of myself my whole life. I told him, I said, "Don't ask me to pose. Just shoot it 'cause I can't pose." But it's a great picture, and it was-, came out on the fourth of July. I happened to be a Sunday so it was in the social section. It's a 8x10. And he put in headlines across the top, "Searching for Rosies." And in about a month, I had found five-, ten Rosies. Ten Rosie or more. But when I went to that meeting – and this is the purpose of the association, I mean, one of its main purposes, the American Rosie the Riveter Association – there were ten or twelve women there 90 years or older, who traveled from all over the country. And the women told their stories, and I thought, women need to be telling these stories. And I had tried in Rome, but I don't have a leadership mindset. And so I just make feeble efforts, and if doesn't work I quit. So, I give up on it and go to something else, not intentionally. It's just my nature. But anyway, as a result of that article, we were able to form a chapter of the American Rosie the Riveters in Rome. And we-. That's why we're here today or how we're here. We had our first meeting in 2010, I think. And at that time we had maybe 12 members. And now we have-. We have five that are active. Six, five or six. Some are deceased and others cannot participate because of their health.

Interviewer: And what are the daughters of Rosies called?

Tucker: Oh! Yeah, thank you. The daughters can join and it's a very easy-. I mean it doesn't-. People, I ask women-. Of course when you get older, you say, "Oh, I've been a part of too many clubs already, too many groups. Nooo [laughs]!" You

have to get past that barrier. But they will-. You can join and the initial fee is ten dollars. That's all you ever have to spend. They don't-. There's not an annual fee or anything. But the daughters can also join and become Rosebuds. I'm not real fond of that, that title. But anyway, it doesn't matter about that. But they-. They now are the people who have to do the organizational work. We can't do it anymore. It's too much. And they're all volunteers. It's amazing. They started out with five members in 1997, and I think now we have over 2,000 members. A lot of those are deceased of course, and we get a mail out, a newsletter every quarter. And they list once a year-. They have a memorial service at the annual meeting. And they list the ones who have deceased. And last year I counted. I mean it was close to 60. So it's, you know-. If we don't-. That's what-. And I'm-. I was 16. Most of the women that went to work in World War II were 18 and in their twenties, so I'm able still to do more than-. And I've had excellent health all my life, so I'm blessed in that way. And I can still drive in Rome. I don't like to drive when I don't know which lane to get in. So, and especially with other people in the car. But I can be there transportation. And we have monthly-. We did have monthly meetings. That's sort of dwindling because we don't have enough people.

Interviewer: Well you spoke of the changing roles of women after World War II, and you want to tell the story of your niece who went to veterinarian school at the University of Georgia?

Tucker: Yes, I have a niece who's now about-. She's 27 and she is a veterinarian. She's been out of school for a year, but I went to her-. Jessie is just, has such a great love for animals and people of course. But I went to her graduation from University of Georgia, and I was having a discussion with another parent. And we were talking about-. She was telling me her son was graduating from the in education. She said, "I hope he can find a job. Where is your student? What is she gone do?" And I said, "Well she's graduating from the school of veterinaria." And he, she said, "Well I'm from Nashville," and she said, "In 1952 my sister came here to this school and wanted to register as a student in the-, to become a veterinarian. And they said, 'Sorry but we don't allow women. We don't take women students in that school.' And so she didn't get to do it." And when I told Jessie that story of course that night after graduation-. And that year a week or two, a few weeks later, we went to the-, to Nashville. Jessie went with me and drove me there because, to the meeting, the annual meeting [of the American Rosie the Riveter Association]. And at the end of the meeting they had an hour or so of time where any of us could just pop up and say something we wanted to say – a part of our story or something that had happened to us at the convention. And Jessie is shy. She's not a-, eager to get up in front of people, but when I came back after I had gotten up and said something, a few words, she was sitting on the edge of her chair just [excited face], you know. "Aunt Jane, can I get up there?" And I said, "Well sure. Go ahead hon. You can go when as soon as that lady sits

down.” And so she hopped up there. And I hadn’t really emphasized this to her, and I haven’t-. I don’t always inject this into my story about how women became much more independent. That was a huge part of World War II of course. But anyway, she got up. She said, “I just can’t thank you ladies enough for making it possible for me to be here and to tell you that I am going to become a veterinarian.” And then she-. She’s so emotional about it, she burst into tears. And the sweet lady that-. The Rosebud that was the president just wrapped her up in her arms and gave her a big warm hug. So she was able to go on and finish her bit of her speech. But I-. When I invited her to go with me, I said, “Now Jessie, say no if you don’t want to go. It’s just gone be a lot of old people, and I don’t know that you’ll have a good time.” She loved it. She said, “Aunt Jane, that’s the-.” And she still says it. “That’s the best trip I ever had.” And she was busy texting my niece at home. She said “My-.” She said, “B.J., these ladies are up here doing the Jitter Bug [laughs].” Not Aunt Jane. I couldn’t Jitter Bug when I was young. But they were, you know-. And we had a band, and they were dancing together. And we did that during World War II, and I had forgotten that we danced together. Because there weren’t men enough to dance with you, you know. So the-. We just danced. The girls would dance together. But she enjoyed it and-. And it did-. And there were so many women for years, and I’m still sure that’s still true. But they were trapped in terrible situations, abusive situations. And some people allow themselves to stay in those today even. Of course I understand that, but they weren’t skilled. The only jobs you could get as a woman would be as a teacher. You had to go to college and not many women got to do that. You either did that or you became a waitress or you could do, be a beautician or stenographer. And I-. See I’m always speaking from my perspective. My father’s twin sister went to New York and got a job in her age-. She’s aged 20 and she went by her-. Well maybe she had some friends there. But she worked as a stenographer, but she was an unu-. People don’t usually-. And I think in the South and certainly in rural areas, smaller towns, we didn’t know we could do anything, you know, special. At least I didn’t. I know that’s not true generally. But it did open up-. It gave us a sense of knowing that we could do whatever we tried to do. And I don’t know why-. And this is another reason people ought to understand a little bit about-, or just remember history. But the men said we couldn’t do it. And a lot of ‘em said that. They-. Companies just wouldn’t hire women in the beginning. I have read that. In the beginning of the war, like 1941, they didn’t want to do that. So but if you look at the history of this country and of the world, women have always been able to do things. They fought in the Revolutionary War. They fought in the Civil War. They traveled across the country as pioneers and gave up their children and buried ‘em along with the men. You know, I’m not minimizing what the men were doing. But why did they think we couldn’t do it? But we did [laughs].

Interviewer: Thank you so much, Ms. Tucker.