

**Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series**

**Jessie Moss Interview**

**Conducted by James Newberry**

**April 27, 2016**

**Transcribed by Ryan Smith**

Born in Forsyth County, Georgia in 1918, Jessie Moss took a job at Bell Aircraft Corporation during World War II. She worked on a team building fuselages for B-29 bombers. When her husband returned from fighting in the Pacific, Moss paid for the construction of their first home with money saved from her job at Bell Aircraft. Moss lives in Cumming, Georgia. She recorded her oral history interview at Kennesaw State University in April 2016.

**Full Transcription**

Interviewer: Hi my name is James Newberry here at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University on Wednesday April 27<sup>th</sup> 2016 with Jessie Moss. Mrs. Moss did you agree to this interview.

Moss: Yes.

Interviewer: Could you please state your full name for me?

Moss: Jessie Moss. You want me to say all of it? Jessie Bell Moss. Jessie Bell Day Moss.

Interviewer: Okay and when and where were you born?

Moss: Well I was born November the 27<sup>th</sup> 1918 somewhere in Forsyth County, I don't know where.

Interviewer: So, you were not born in a hospital.

Moss: No, not back then. No, my mother had nine I'm one of nine the youngest of nine.

Interviewer: So, tell me a little bit about your child hood, what were your parents' names?

Moss: My mother's name was Nettie Jeannette they called her Nettie, my father's name was Albert, he had an initial, I never knew what the initial was for, Albert L. Day.

Interviewer: And you said you had a lot of siblings?

Moss: Yes. I had three brothers and five sisters.

Interviewer: So, tell me about your childhood, what did you do for fun?

Moss: Oh, get out and play in the woods, make playhouses in the woods. I played school a lot out on the porch. Back then we lived in country houses you know. So I could sit out there on that old porch and put my knees under the porch and have all my books up here and everything. I was a teacher. [laughs]

Interviewer: And what did your parents do for a living?

Moss: Well my father he was a farmer and a builder, a carpenter. During the Depression we moved a lot and I hated it because I had to change schools all the time. But when—part of the time he would build houses when that was good you know, and when that slacked off he'd move to a farm and then he would go and do, they had sharecropping back then and so he would just go then and rent a place and rent the land and everything and share so much of it with the owner. So he would go back from the country to the city, back and to.

Interviewer: Did you have any chores?

Moss: Well when he was on the farm I would pick cotton some. And I hoed the field and made gardens things like that. Cause I was young you know but I still helped. At that time my sister and I were—grew up together we were the last two, you know, younger so all the others were already gone on and married. They were more like aunts and uncles.

Interviewer: So, then what are your memories of the Depression, you said you moved around a lot? Do you remember knowing that there was a depression going on?

Moss: No, I never did realize that until after I'd done married. Then I got thinking about all those things you know and hearing about it. You know I heard about it then but didn't care nothing about it see? I didn't have to worry about it everybody lived about like.

Interviewer: So, tell me where did you graduate from high school?

Moss: At Chestatee High School in 1938.

Interviewer: Could you spell that?

Moss: C-H-E-S-T-A-T double E.

Interviewer: And where was that?

Moss: It was—Bud, tell 'em where it's at [speaks to another in the room] No, I better tell 'em myself. It was between Cumming and Gainesville, that all I know, between

Cumming and Gainesville. But now it's a big high school, but I think it was in Forsyth County somebody said it was.

Interviewer: And when you graduated from high school what did you envision for your future, what did you want for yourself?

Moss: Well I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do but I would've liked to have been a beautician. But I didn't have the money at the time. So I didn't do anything for a year or two right after I married for maybe about a year. And I would work some in Cumming at the little dime store and that was maybe, you know, on Holidays or something like that. Then I went to, the first thing I did, when the war broke out that is, they wanted telephone operators. So I was about twenty years old then eighteen or twenty, no about twenty, when I went to the Southern Bell Telephone Company in Atlanta. I trained to be a telephone operator.

Interviewer: Where was the Southern Bell Telephone Company?

Moss: It was on Ivy Street right off of Peachtree I think, cause I could just walk up there at night or after worked a split shift, on four hours and off four hours. Could walk the streets of Atlanta at night by myself, nothing.

Interviewer: When you say split shift does that mean—what does that mean?

Moss: That means you'd work four hours, stay off four hours, and go back to work four hours.

Interviewer: So, you could never sleep more than four hours?

Moss: I guess I didn't, if I did, I don't remember, I did during the daytime.

Interviewer: How much money did you make as a telephone operator?

Moss: Thirteen dollars a week, and I paid my board and everything you know out of that thirteen to five dollars a week. The I'd go to Cumming on the bus, I guess it cost me maybe fifty cents or a dollar, seventy-five.

Interviewer: So, what are your memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

Moss: Well I was out riding on a Sunday afternoon with a friend, that friend was just a friend and he married my niece, and once it came on the little car radio, President Roosevelt announced it we was at war with Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you heard the news?

Moss: I guess I was kind of a little shocked.

Interviewer: Were you in Cumming at that time?

Moss: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: So, you weren't in Atlanta yet?

Moss: No.

Interviewer: Ok, well tell me about meeting your husband.

Moss: Well I lived in Alpharetta at the time and his mother lived at the Road, it was Roads Inn. None of us paid. His mother lived at the Road but he and his three other brothers they all went into service to the military and so we live by them about three years and moved back to Cumming. I had never met him, I had seen him walk past when I live there. But his mother and us were real close so they would come and visit us and his brother told me, "I'm gone call Paul," my husband, "to come and meet you." He was in the Coast Guard then, I said, "That'll be good." So in about maybe a couple of months something like that this good looking sailor come to my house. First time I'd seen him and he looked so much better than that brother. [laughs] Anyway that's how I met my husband.

Interviewer: So, you started dating?

Moss: Oh yeah. But he came home from service is what he did, visited his mother and all because the war hadn't started right then. So we started writing letters and I've got three hundred letters we wrote back and to. Still got them.

Interviewer: What did you say in those letters?

Moss: Uhh, I'm not going to tell you. [laughs] I don't know just about, we had just met each other but the first time he had come to see me it was at night you know and when he started to leave we were standing out by, he had borrowed his brother-in-law's car, a little roadster I think. Anyway he started to leave and he had more sense and was more mature than younger boys I had dated, you know. And he asked me if he could kiss me bye, he asked me that, can't you see that I'm asking him now.

Interviewer: What was your answer to him?

Moss: I said—I don't remember, I think I said yes of course! [laughs]

Interviewer: So, tell me his full name.

Moss: Paul Jack Moss

Interviewer: And he had already been in the service but the war hadn't started?

Moss: Oh yes, he had been in about five or six years before I met him.

Interviewer: Did you also have a sister that married one of his brothers?

Moss: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

Moss: Well we had never seen either one of them, they were the two younger brothers. So anyway they started dating and they got married in June '42 and Paul and I got married December '42.

Interviewer: Tell me about your wedding.

Moss: Well it was very simple cause you know we didn't have time to have a big wedding, nobody hardly did then. But we wanted to get married, you know, because we had been dating a year from '41 to '42 through the mail mostly. He came home two and three times a year, one time he came home jumped the, went A.W.O.L— to come see me one weekend. So anyway when he went back they put him in the brig for a month. But anyway the wedding was very simple and so we went back to Norfolk Virginia on the train, the first time this Georgia girl had been out of Georgia, and rode the train, I thought that was something, you know. We went back didn't even have a place to go had to go to the USO and they got us a place and by the way we had the bridal suite in the place we went to, a big boarding house.

Interviewer: Wow so tell me what you wore at your wedding.

Moss: Well I shopped about a month looking around, and I didn't have too much money but I wanted something pretty nice. I just got a blue wool suit and then I got a navy hat and purse and shoes, you kind of matched things then you know, and he just wore his navy blue sailors' suit. So that was what I wore. I don't even think I had any flowers, we didn't have time for anything, and we had one of Paul's brothers, one of my friends, and my sister that went with us to get married.

Interviewer: Ok. So, tell me why was he posted in Norfolk, Virginia?

Moss: Well he had been making a lot of trips before I met him overseas you know, but this was different they were on a letter wood ship, a troop carrier, and they carried troops across and they couldn't tell us where they went ever, we didn't know where they were at, or how long they'd be gone. They carried troops over and they brought back the wounded and the prisoners. I would stay in the boarding house till he got back you know. If it wasn't too long, some time he'd go one short trips and be back in three or four days.

Interviewer: Tell me about life there in the boarding house.

Moss: Oh this—There is an old, old, I thought she was old, at least I thought she was old back then, she probably wasn't over fifty, but she's kind of stooped over like I am now. Anyway, she had this big boarding house, two stories and a bridal suite—must have been three floors because the bridal suite was on the third floor. Anyway there were people there from up north and I was just a little old southern girl and they had more fun at talking—we had a room down stairs we'd meet in there you know and talk and meet each other and all and they were mostly from the North, they loved to talk to me cause I was a little old southern girl with that [indecipherable] I got to be real good friends with her staying there. We was there I guess about three or four months.

Interviewer: Do you remember her name?

Moss: No.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to the USO?

Moss: No I didn't. I just stayed there until he'd come back in.

Interviewer: And what was his job aboard the ship?

Moss: He was a carpenter, carpenter's mate.

Interviewer: So, you were only in Virginia for three or four months and where did you go after that?

Moss: Well I would go there, then when he'd go back out I would go back there. When he'd come in he'd call me and I'd go back. [indecipherable] When I had to leave there the first time, anyway my room was gone so this other lady we found another place and she would have me a room when he'd come back and he'd call me and I'd stay until he went out again. Maybe three or four days maybe a couple of weeks or something like that.

Interviewer: So, if he was gone you were coming back to Georgia?

Moss: Sometime I did, sometimes I wouldn't.

Interviewer: So, when did you come back to Georgia for good?

Moss: For good? Oh you mean after the war and all?

Interviewer: No, when you came back to get a job?

Moss: Oh. I don't remember just when it was. Anyway but he was supposed to go overseas and I'd come back to Georgia then when he was going to stay a while I knew, no I didn't know where he was going because they couldn't tell us nothing. But anyway to Hawaii is where he went and so I went back home then, and that's when I went to work at the Bell Bomber Plant.

Interviewer: So why did you need to work, or did you need to work?

Moss: Well, I could have—Well he didn't want me to work, they didn't make nothing for service then. But I wanted to work I didn't want to sit at home the whole time. When the Bomber plant opened up they got to talking about that, you know, I had already quit the telephone when I got married, he come home and got me then, didn't give them no notice, just went upstairs, just told the lady we was getting married and leaving.

Interviewer: So how did you hear about the job at Bell?

Moss: Well it was all over the news and everything, I knew they was building it.

Interviewer: And what did they say about it when they were building it, what was in the news about it?

Moss: In the news about it. Oh, they said they were going to have the Bomber plant, you know, planes building there and there'd be a lot of jobs for people and it was good pay. So much better pay that right at that time I was working down at Davidsons in Atlanta, Riches too, just little part time jobs.

Interviewer: So, you were working in Davidsons and Riches?

Moss: Riches then ,yeah.

Interviewer: What did you do there?

Moss: I worked in the children's department.

Interviewer: So, you're saying that you heard about the job at Bell and it was going to pay more?

Moss: That was before, right when the war started when I worked at Bell Telephone.

Interviewer: Ok. So but Bell Bomber Plant— tell me about applying for that.

Moss: I don't remember when exactly I went applying for it but I remember we had to go into training and we trained about two weeks before we were put on the job.

Interviewer: Describe the training.

Moss: The what?

Interviewer: The training.

Moss: The training. They let us train for where they was going to put us, so I was trained for the working on the plane, on the fuselage.

Interviewer: Who trained you?

Moss: I don't know what his name was, but I told somebody he looked like Clark Gable.  
[laughter]

Interviewer: Did he really?

Moss: Yeah, he really did!

Interviewer: Wow! So, where did you live while you worked at the Bomber plant?

Moss: I lived with my mother and daddy in Cumming.

Interviewer: Ok and how did you commute to work?

Moss: In an old bus. It wasn't a school bus, it's just an old rickety bus and it ran all the way to Alpharetta and back. But I think it took, I don't know how long it took us but it was about thirty-five miles or something like that.

Interviewer: Ok, and what did your parents think of you working at this airplane factory?

Moss: They were alright with it. They didn't mind. I didn't know it. They didn't say anything about it.

Interviewer: So, what was your position or your job while working at the plant?

Moss: I worked on the fuselage and fitting skins on the fuselage. A skin was something like aluminum and it would come out just like a big egg. You've probably seen some of it and all. It was framed up, wood frame, you know the shape of a big egg. My worst day there at Bell Bomber Plant I'll tell you about it. They told me one day, I drilled really more than I ever did do riveting, you know. Anyway, they told me to get up on top of the plane to do some drilling, I mean the fuselage. Well I crawled up there you know we wore pants then, that's when women introduced pants to this women now. Anyway I crawled up there and I got my drill and I started drilling down you know and then all at once I felt a vibration right where I was sitting and I knew I had to do something quick, and I was young so I jumped but I didn't quite jump high enough, it tore a little hole in my pants and I had to go to first aid and they put a band aid on me and my top was long enough for the hole in my pants to be covered up. They said you might as well go

on, it's about noon-time, to the restaurant and have lunch, said take a little rest before I went back to work. So I went to the restaurant and the country girl that I am and was I like turnip greens and I ordered turnip greens and a vegetable plate and I was enjoying those turnip greens so good and started to take another bite and there was a big June bug looking right at me. You can imagine how I felt, I just put my plate down and walked out. I never did say a word to nobody and I never did go back in there, I carried my lunch from then on.

Interviewer: So, they had a cafeteria?

Moss: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: What types of foods did they serve there?

Moss: I didn't go long enough to find out I think, but I think it was just like general country cooking, something like that. And several meats and all.

Interviewer: Who was serving the food?

Moss: Most—Some young and some old women and girls you know.

Interviewer: And tell me about the clothes you wore to work.

Moss: Well you could wear, just so you wear pants you could wear what you wanted to. But I had slack suits you know. And then Paul was over in Honolulu then, I didn't know he was there then but later I found out, but I told him wherever he was at to send me, I wanted if he could send me some slacks so he sent me two pair and then I got one pair of coveralls things like that. We could wear— she got some pictures of all this if you want to look at it later.

Interviewer: Did you have to put your hair up?

Moss: Yeah I wore what they called Snood, it was like a crocheted thing, I had kind of long hair [motions to her shoulder] down to here and it hung you know you can let your hair hang I put on it [motions to under her ears] came halfway up here and your hair hung in it. They were pretty you could get them all different, always wished I'd saved some of them, different colors and I'd always match them to my suits.

Interviewer: Did you have to wear any protective gear around your face?

Moss: No, no I didn't.

Interviewer: Ok and what kind of shoes?

Moss: I think just penny loafers. If you know what those are?

Interviewer: I do. So were you working alone or part of a larger group?

Moss: Oh no it was about five of us, five or six of us. I had an old man working with me and I couldn't stand him, thought he was old anyways, he looked old to me, I just didn't like him. He wanted to stay around me too much and I wanted to push him away and so they got rid of him for me.

Interviewer: What do you mean stay around you too much?

Moss: Well he just kind of rub up against me you know and I didn't like it that and he was just irritable.

Interviewer: So, was he sort of harassing you?

Moss: No nothing like that, but they just got rid of him and put someone else.

Interviewer: How old was he?

Moss: The old man? He looked to be about sixty-five or seventy.

Interviewer: Ok so how many men and how many women were in your group?

Moss: Oh, there was about six of us who worked on that.

Interviewer: And did ya'll have a particular job to do or?

Moss: Just the fitting the skins on was our job, and they'd have to drill a hole in it and counter sink it and that's what I did mostly and some riveting.

Interviewer: What does counter sink mean?

Moss: Means you've got to have when it's finished it needs to be smooth.

Interviewer: Ok. So how many of these "eggs" would you get a day?

Moss: Oh, you mean of the fuselage? Oh I think we worked on the same one about half the time I was there. It was a big thing it'd take a long time to just do one.

Interviewer: So, did you answer to a boss?

Moss: Oh yeah, I had a foreman.

Interviewer: Do you remember his name?

Moss: I did for a long time and I've forgot it.

Interviewer: And was he a good boss or bad boss?

Moss: He was pretty good, he was a big flirt. [laughter]

Interviewer: Well tell me about the relationship between the men and the women in the factory.

Moss: In the factory? I never was around nobody but this one group I was in.

Interviewer: How did he flirt with you?

Moss: He wanted to take me home you know and all that, and he was married and I was married, I said, “ I don’t do that I’m married” he says, “What do you think your husbands doing?”, I said, “Well, I trust him.” So, that was the end of that. I guess that’s where the flirting between men and women started.

Interviewer: Because this is the first time that many women are coming to work?

Moss: That’s right and together you know all the men that worked there were older because anybody that was able to go to war had to go to war.

Interviewer: So, you said mostly you were drilling? Is that right?

Moss: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you ever do any other jobs?

Moss: No, we just had the drilling and it’d come out in just a frame you know and all we had to do was fix these, and they’d send the big skins out that went on certain sections around it.

Interviewer: And how big was the drill?

Moss: Oh I don’t—maybe about that long. [Moss motions her hands to show the size of the drill, about 12 inches.]

Interviewer: Did you find the work easy, difficult?

Moss: No, no.

Interviewer: Describe the work how hard was it, how easy was it?

Moss: It wasn’t hard. I didn’t mind it at all. Just like a big drill you know. Of course it was— I don’t know— whether we had to—it wouldn’t have had a battery or nothing like that. But just a big drill that we would drill.

Interviewer: You said you had that tear in your outfit, did you ever feel like you were in danger when you were working?

Moss: No, I didn't.

Interviewer: Ok. So describe the factory floor, what did it look like, how big was it? The factory floor how big was it?

Moss: You mean right where the fuselage was? It wasn't too big, but it wasn't too small either because the fuselage is a big thing itself you know on a plane.

Interviewer: And when you arrived to work every day what did the factory look like? Describe the entry.

Moss: The what?

Interviewer: The entrance to the building. Describe it.

Moss: Oh, I don't remember. You know I don't even remember the building, but I remember going in and we had guard you know, had to check us in and we walked through long tunnels, it was underground, we had to walk through those. And uh, that was about all I remembered about it.

Interviewer: Did you carry a name badge?

Moss: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you still have that?

Moss: No, I don't. But I don't know why I didn't save those things. I'm good at saving but I didn't save those. But, I do have one little card that in Norfolk, Virginia where I got a card for something there, like going to the PA or whatever it was to get your groceries.

Interviewer: How much money did you make at Bell Bomber?

Moss: Oh, I don't remember right at first I made wasn't as much as when I left, but when I left I was making fifty-six a week and boy that was something besides the thirteen a week I had been making. So fifty-six a week was more than my husband made.

Interviewer: What did you do with the money at the time?

Moss: Well I paid my parents a little board, you know, and they didn't want to charge me but I'd give them a little, and I bought war bonds, and what he'd send me I'd put it in the bank and saved it.

Interviewer: So, tell me about buying a war bond. How would you buy it?

Moss: I don't remember how I did it. I think you signed up for it and they just took it out of your check.

Interviewer: Ok. So what hours did you work?

Moss: I think it was four to twelve. Four in the afternoon to twelve.

Interviewer: Ok and tell me about a typical day on the job. From getting there at four pm to leaving at twelve am.

Moss: The difficulty in getting there, working, and coming? Well they picked me up in my parents' home there in Cumming and somebody had just bought the old bus. They did that for a job. They'd take people over there from Cumming to work over there and of course it was an old rattley, rough bus, you know, over there and back. I'd get over there—what else did you ask me about that? The difficulties I had or anything?

Interviewer: No, just a typical day.

Moss: Oh, typical? Well that was about it riding over there and back, signing in, it was nice.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of your co-workers or anybody else that worked there that you liked in particular?

Moss: Oh, there was another, there's one more girl and she didn't like me and I didn't know why. I could tell she just wouldn't stay around me no she didn't like me. But anyways, she was there and another man, her partner, and two more. It was about six of us.

Interviewer: Ok. Did you have breaks during the day?

Moss: You know I don't remember having a break. I don't know whether we did or not. If we did seventy-two years ago it's left my mind.

Interviewer: Well if you got there at four in the afternoon did you have dinner there?

Moss: No, I didn't.

Interviewer: Ok. So, you said you'd stopped eating at the cafeteria—

Moss: I started to take my lunch.

Interviewer: You took a lunch?

Moss: I took a lunch after that!

Interviewer: And what did you take in your lunch?

Moss: Oh, maybe a ham and a biscuit, sausage biscuit or something, my mother would fix me lunch.

Interviewer: Did you ever see a finished plane there?

Moss: No, I didn't.

Interviewer: Never saw one?

Moss: No, I didn't. Seemed like they'd finish one but we didn't get to go see it. Some way or another. But they finished a lot of them.

Interviewer: And what kind of planes were they making at Bell Bomber?

Moss: I worked on B-29, yeah. If they made anymore there I don't know. I never heard of any.

Interviewer: Ok. So, were there ever any ceremonies or events at the plant?

Moss: No.

Interviewer: No big get-togethers or anything?

Moss: No, they didn't even make your picture.

Interviewer: No were you a part of a Union when you worked there?

Moss: You know I don't know if I was in a Union or not, kind of think it was.

Interviewer: But you don't remember?

Moss: Don't remember.

Interviewer: Ok. Do you know how many people were working there at the time?

Moss: At the whole plant? No I don't. A lot of them though.

Interviewer: A lot of them. So, you could just see big crowds of people coming in?

Moss: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Did you work alongside any African Americans there?

Moss: Any African Americans? No I didn't.

Interviewer: Ok so there were none in your unit?

Moss: No, not that I'd ever seen.

Interviewer: Ok so how long did you work at Bell Bomber in total?

Moss: I think about nine months, somewhere in there, maybe a little more.

Interviewer: Why did you quit?

Moss: Well my husband came home from Hawaii then and so he's got shore duty in Mobile, so we decided where we wanted to go Mobile or—what was it over in Mississippi? Somewhere in Mississippi.

Interviewer: So, either a base in Mississippi or a base in Mobile?

Moss: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: And why did you choose Mobile?

Moss: Well my husband liked it better and it was a little closer to home.

Interviewer: Ok, so you had left the job because he had come back was this after the war was over or was the war still going on?

Moss: Oh, the war was still going on then, and we lived and stayed there for about—oh we moved there in 49' and we came back in 65'. Raised my family there.

Interviewer: Ok, so before we go to your family, I want to ask you a couple more questions. How did you feel about having a job like that in an airplane manufacturing plant during the war?

Moss: Well, I thought— I felt like I was helping you know.

Interviewer: That could be your contribution to the war effort?

Moss: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Interviewer: And did you follow news of the war while it was going on?

Moss: Follow the what?

Interviewer: Did you follow the news, did you keep up with what was going on in the war?

Moss: Yeah, I kept up with it on account of my husband being in it, you know, yeah I did.

Interviewer: And how did you get your news at that time?

Moss: It would either be in the paper, something like that, or on the radio.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to see movies?

Moss: Oh yeah went to movies. We had a little theatre in Cumming then, and of course I went to see *Gone With The Wind* when it came out. My favorite movie. [chuckles]

Interviewer: So that would have been 1939, a little bit earlier?

Moss: Yeah.

Interviewer: When you went to the movie did they play a news reel?

Moss: About the war or anything? I don't remember that if they did.

Interviewer: Do you remember hearing President Roosevelt's fireside chats?

Moss: I do and I don't, it kind of rings a bell.

Interviewer: Do you remember hearing him on the radio?

Moss: Yeah, oh yeah.

Interviewer: And what did you think of President Roosevelt at that time?

Moss: I liked him! I liked him a lot!

Interviewer: Why?

Moss: I don't know. I guess it was because he was connected with my husband and everything you know, being the President during the war and all.

Interviewer: Did you send letters to your husband?

Moss: Did I what?

Interviewer: Did you send letter to your husband?

Moss: [excitedly] Did I send letters! Oh my. I sent three hundred. He sent his to me, he kept his and I kept mine, it was about three hundred in all. I carried them all to a ship reunion we had one time and they want us to bring some memorabilia you know, so I carried that box of letters and they couldn't believe it.

Interviewer: Why have you kept them for so long?

Moss: I wanted to keep them. I read them over and over when he was gone you know.

Interviewer: And what did you write in those letters?

Moss: Oh my! Would you ask me that?! [laughs] I told him how much I loved him! And how much I missed him!

Interviewer: So when you got his letters did they ever have censor?

Moss: Oh yeah sometimes some of the letters would be censored across the envelope and inside it would be marked over.

Interviewer: And why was that?

Moss: I don't know. Something I'd wrote I guess. I don't know. You know they didn't want didn't want you talking— reason they wouldn't let them tell their wives about where they were or going. They said "loose lips, sink ships" so that's the danger in that.

Interviewer: Where did you see that message, "Loose lips, sink ships."

Moss: Oh goodness, it was on signs everywhere.

Interviewer: So, they're like posters? Did you see a lot of posters up at that time?

Moss: Yeah, like posters. Yeah, quite a few, about being careful with what you say and all.

Interviewer: So, tell me about rationing.

Moss: Rationing. Yeah we had a lot of rationing then. You know if you got out and helped in anyway in the war effort you could be a Rosie or anything without joining you know, things like I go to and all. Anybody that gets out and picked up aluminum foil or anything could turn it in and a lot of things was rationed like the sugar, and the tires on cars, nylon hoses that made parachutes, helped to make parachutes, all those things. A lot of rationing and car gasoline, couldn't hardly go anywhere, because you couldn't get enough gasoline.

Interviewer: Did your parents get a ration book?

Moss: I'm sure they did but I don't remember. I'm sure they did though.

Interviewer: Do you remember when President Roosevelt died in Georgia?

Moss: Oh I did, yeah, I remember when he died. I hated to hear it because I liked to hear him talk. I just liked him.

Interviewer: So, tell me about the end of the war, what are your memories of Victory Day?

Moss: You know I really don't remember that too much. I remember when it happened, but I was happy about it. I've got —You know the big poster that— I think it's in New York when the war was over and this nurse— this sailor grabbed this nurse and was kissing her. [mimics that photograph] I got that great big picture of that. It was gifted to me.

Interviewer: So that about sums up how you felt about the end of the war?

Moss: Do what?

Interviewer: That picture sort of sums up how you felt about then end of the war?

Moss: Oh goodness yes.

Interviewer: So, you said you were reunited with your husband when he came back from the Pacific, and then ya'll had to make a decision about where to move, and why did you choose Mobile?

Moss: I let my husband choose it, but I wanted to get as close as I could to home you know. So he chose Mobile because he liked it better, New Orleans was the other one.

Interviewer: Ah, New Orleans?

Moss: [nods] New Orleans.

Interviewer: Tell me about building the house in Roswell.

Moss: [laughs] Oh, that was fun. Anyway, I had told you I think on the phone that day I talked to you, if it was you I was talking to. I saved all I could and bought war bonds and then Paul sent me all he could and so I kept them and put it in the bank, and when the war was over we went back to Roswell and his brother that married my sister had a place down there and enough land to let us to build a little house on. So we with the money that I had saved, we built that— I had told you two bedroom but it was just a one bedroom, one big bedroom, a bathroom, and a big kitchen, that was the house with a little porch on it. But we built that little house with the money I had saved.

Interviewer: So that was before you had moved to Mobile?

Moss: That was after the war you know. Then we stayed there about three years, about three or four years. Donna was two years old when we moved back to—. When he was in service, when we was living in Mobile, during the war he was at the carpenters shop at the Mobile Coast Guard base, well they called him after we had been living there about three or four years, about four I think, the man in the shop

where he was working there died and they wanted Paul to come back and take over the shop. So we went back to Mobile in 49', war was over officially in 46' and we moved back down there. He took the job because he could hardly get a job anywhere, him and his brother that married my sister, they both went to Atlanta I think they got a job driving garbage trucks or something like that. But you know he took it and I cried all the way down there moving back, I didn't want to go back, I wanted to stay at home.

Interviewer: So, I want to get the timeline straight. So when he got back from the Pacific you moved to Mobile during the war?

Moss: During the war—when he got—yeah that's when we moved back to Mobile. I mean to Mobile the first time.

Interviewer: Then you moved to Roswell Georgia?

Moss: Right.

Interviewer: And built a house with your money?

Moss: Uh-huh. [Yes]

Interviewer: And then in 1949 his old boss died and moved back to Mobile?

Moss: That's right.

Interviewer: Ok.

Moss: You got it straight.

Interviewer: So, he's still in the military at this time?

Moss: Still in the military, uh-huh.

Interviewer: But he was working in the carpenter's shop at the base in Mobile?

Moss: Uh-huh and he got hurt on his back and he had to get out of service and he just went into civil service then, in the same shop and stayed— we stayed about twenty something years down there.

Interviewer: In Mobile?

Moss: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Now did you work outside of the home?

Moss: No. No. I wanted to, but my husband never did want me to work, so I stayed home and raised my three children. But anyway I wanted to go this one Christmas and make a little extra money you know so I went—I think I worked two days I went and come back and I had to hang some clothes out, we hung them on a line then you know, I didn't have a dryer or anything so anyway— and the next day— and my best friend was keeping my youngest son you know he was a little toddler, she was keeping him and when I went to pick him up he called her “momma”, and I never did go back. I never did go back to work. [laughter]

Interviewer: You were upset?

Moss: That upset me I didn't like that.

Interviewer: What job had you gone to do?

Moss: I was just going to work in a store, you know department store for Christmas.

Interviewer: Ok. So how many children did you have there?

Moss: Three. Two boys and a girl.

Interviewer: And tell me about returning to Georgia, when was that?

Moss: That was about '65.

Interviewer: Where did you settle?

Moss: Where did I?

Interviewer: Where did you settle in Georgia?

Moss: Oh when I moved—wait let me get my mind straight now—when we left Mobile and came back— I know his brother, again [shakes her head and smiles]—we stayed close you know, his brother lived in Alpharetta on Union Hill Road about a mile or two out of out of Alpharetta. Anyway, he had already gotten out of service himself, out of the Army and built a house there you know and had some land, about thirty acres or so, forty or something like that. So he sold us twenty acres again some more land right by him and we moved a house in there from Atlanta. Donna was working then somewhere down there in Atlanta and she saw this house— we were going to build a house on it you know— we had twenty acres and we was so proud of that twenty acres. Anyway, we were going to build and Donna called one day and said she saw this pretty Cape Cod home in Atlanta that was going to be—I think almost giving it away back then two or three hundred dollars, maybe not. I don't think it was even three hundred, and you could get the house for that and have it moved and put on our lot. When we moved it— we got

it and moved it and it was beautiful home. Time we got through with that completed, you know what had to be done to it, it was almost like new. We spent fourteen hundred dollars in all for that place. [laughs] Can you believe that?

Interviewer: And when was that?

Moss: In '65, '66 somewhere in there.

Interviewer: And that home was in Cumming?

Moss: Alpharetta.

Interviewer: Alpharetta, I'm sorry. How long did you live in Alpharetta?

Moss: Oh, about seven years I believe.

Interviewer: Was your husband still working at the time?

Moss: He worked on Northside Hospital in Atlanta, uh-huh.

Interviewer: Where did you move from Alpharetta?

Moss: We moved to Lake Hartwell.

Interviewer: Why did you go out there?

Moss: Well GA 400 was coming through and if you've got any land they're just begging you for it at a big price, so we took them up on it. So we moved again and moved up there to Lake Hartwell.

Interviewer: And then why did you move back?

Moss: Well my husband passed away up there, Paul was living there, and we had some land—we had already bought some land to come back to Cumming you know, be closer to the children as we was getting older.

Interviewer: Ok so I'm going to jump way back, there's something I wanted to know a little more about and that's the Southern Bell Telephone Company.

Moss: Ok.

Interviewer: So, you said you lived on Highland Avenue in a boarding house?

Moss: Uh huh. No, it wasn't a boarding house. It was friends of ours who moved from Cumming to Atlanta and they just let us— they knew us you know. So we just got a room from them.

Interviewer: And how did you get to work?

Moss: On a streetcar.

Interviewer: Really?

Moss: [smiles] Yeah.

Interviewer: And the office was on Ivy Street?

Moss: The house?

Interviewer: No, the Southern Bell.

Moss: I'm pretty sure it was on Ivy Street I don't know if it's still there or not.

Interviewer: And what did you do as a telephone operator?

Moss: I was training for long distance operator.

Interviewer: What does that mean?

Moss: Mean—see the war was on then so we was going to have a lot of long distance calls.

Interviewer: And where were the calls coming in from?

Moss: I don't remember.

Interviewer: What did the office look like?

Moss: Just a big, big room, the one we were in at least, and they had these things like big curlers all stuck in your ears and all these things are hanging on the board you know. It was hard it was hard to learn.

Interviewer: And you were just redirecting calls that were coming in from long distance?

Moss: Yes, uh huh.

Interviewer: So, were those important phone calls?

Moss: Oh yes, I couldn't listen to them I don't know, but I'm sure they were.

Interviewer: So, it wasn't just like regular city calls in Atlanta it was calls coming in from overseas?

Moss: Oh yes.

Interviewer: And who was taking these calls?

Moss: We were. Somebody like me with our training, we was just training for it.

Interviewer: Ok but you were routing the calls, where were you routing the calls to?

Moss: I think that's where we were routing them from long distance you know.

Interviewer: Ok and how long did you work there?

Moss: Eight months about eight months.

Interviewer: Ok and then you stopped there to get married?

Moss: He came home one day and come to the telephone company and got me. He just went upstairs talked to my boss you know and she said well if you're going to go to Norfolk, Virginia you can work there but my husband didn't want me to again so I stayed home all the time.

Interviewer: So, when your husband said he didn't want you working all of these times he told you that how did you feel?

Moss: I didn't mind it. I didn't mind. But you know wherever you went and got a place they'd hardly take you, have a room, if you didn't work. We went to—we tried to find an apartment one time and the lady opened the door and we told her what we wanted a room you know and she said, "do you work?", I said, "no, I don't" and she just slammed the door in our face. [laughter]

Interviewer: Why do you think she did that?

Moss: Because she wasn't gone to have somebody in her house all the time using her electricity and everything. That was the reason.

Interviewer: Tell me about traveling on trains at that time.

Moss: Oh, I loved it. We he'd go off sometime his mother and me took several trips together we'd go see the other brother you know that married my sister we'd go—cause they was in Oklahoma. And so we'd go to Oklahoma and visit them and I'd go several places— go back and to, to Norfolk.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of troops on the train?

Moss: Yeah, quite a few, it was all, it was all Army coming this way you know, coming out of Norfolk back to Georgia.

Interviewer: So, during the war did you ever feel any fear about what could come if the enemy wasn't stopped?

Moss: When the war would stop you mean?

Interviewer: Did you ever feel fearful of the Germans or the Japanese.

Moss: Oh, no no, I never did.

Interviewer: Ok.

Moss: I thought I was too far away from them.

Interviewer: Because you had two oceans between right?

Moss: [laughter]

Interviewer: So, tell me about your children do you have and grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

Moss: Oh, my goodness I've got three children, let's see, three children, one is deceased. The one deceased had two children. And then I have another son and he has one daughter and his wife had one son, they had a second marriage so he's got one step-son. And then my daughter she has three children, two children and one deceased.

Interviewer: And then you have a lot of grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

Moss: Oh goodness yeah, I couldn't get over all of them, that'd take me too long, I'd have to have a pencil and paper to write it down. [laughter]

Interviewer: So, Mrs. Moss why do you think it's important to hear your World War II experience?

Moss: It's important for people to know about, know more about it.

Interviewer: And what do you think is significant about the fact that you were a woman doing this factory work at that time?

Moss: You mean why I was working? You mean?

Interviewer: Yeah, why do you think that is significant or important?

Moss: Well if would can't get somebody to do the job while the men are gone—everybody had to go that was able to go. They'd take them in I guess with a few diseases then, but anyway there was just such a shortage of men you know that they needed us all over the world. Women—Millions of women that worked like I worked there all over the world.

Interviewer: Well is there anything else you want to add before we finish up?

Moss: Oh well just enjoyed being here and meeting you.

Interviewer: [chuckles] Well, thank you very much Jessie Moss and we will end there.

Moss: Well thank you, thank you very much.