

Legacy Series Transcription
Transcribed by Adina Langer
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James Newberry interviews Lou Jordan

Full Transcript

JN: All right. This is James Newberry. I'm here with Lou Jordan on May 19, 2015 in the social sciences building at Kennesaw State University. So, Ms. Jordan, do you agree to this interview?

LJ: I do.

JN: Wonderful. So tell me, when and where were you born?

LJ: I was born in Ether, North Carolina, May 27, 1922. But the town has now been changed. The name of it is Star.

JN: OK. So you have a birthday coming up.

LJ: Correct.

JN: And how old will you be?

LJ: I'll be 93.

JN: So tell me, Ms. Jordan, what was your full name at birth?

LJ: Louvinia Kern.

JN: Tell me, what were your parents' names?

LJ: Laura Needham Kern. My daddy's name was Cornelius Vanderbilt [laughter].

JN: Really?

LJ: But he was known as Neil. Nobody knew his real name. His name was Neil Kern.

JN: Cornelius Vanderbilt Kern.

LJ: Mmm hmmm.

JN: So he was named after sort of a famous man at the time.

LJ: (Laughter) The Vanderbilts! A lot of children that age were born named after famous people.

JN: OK. So tell me, how many brothers and sisters did you have total?

LJ: I have six sisters and one brother.

JN: (1:52) So what did your parents do for a living?

LJ: They were farmers.

JN: And you were born in the house in Ether that your father built?

LJ: My father and his brother built. They cut the timber off of the farm, and dressed it, and built the old house. And it is still standing, and I was married in that house.

JN: Tell me about your childhood there. (2:19) What was life like on the farm?

LJ: Well, we worked from sun-up to sun-down. I started milking when I was six. [Laughter]

JN: What other types of work did you do?

LJ: Well, we had lots of pets. I'd like to tell you about our pets. We had a little pet squirrel. It got hurt, and so we nurtured it back to health. And my daddy wouldn't let us keep it, so we let it in the woods. And we would sit on the front porch and eat popcorn, and that little squirrel would come up and eat with us.

JN: What were some of the other pets?

LJ: We had a pet lamb, and then we had a pet chicken, and a pet pig. When I was about maybe ten years old, one of the old sows rejected her baby, so I raised it with a bottle. When I was about, I guess, maybe eight or nine – I don't remember how old. Anyway, my daddy said we couldn't eat it, so he took it to the market and swapped it for a bicycle.

Take 2: (3:46)

LJ: My daddy built us a swing, a see-saw, and a wagon. So we had plenty of toys.

JN: But you sort of had a menagerie of pets on the farm.

LJ: Mmm hmm. We did. Even a pig! [Laughter]

JN: So, was it sort of a remote area out there?

LJ: Very, very. Very, very.

JN: How often did you go to town?

LJ: Hmm... Maybe twice a year.

JN: Twice a year?

LJ: [Nodding yes]

JN: So, where did you attend school? (4:26)

LJ: Ether to the seventh grade. And then we moved to Star and finished high school.

JN: And what sort of student were you?

LJ: A poor [laughter].

JN: Really?

LJ: [Nodding yes]

JN: What were your best subjects?

LJ: Math.

JN: And how did you know that you were good at math? When did you discover that?

LJ: After I went to Washington. You see, I thought I was dumb till I went to Washington. And they thought I was smart. You see, I fooled them! [Laughter].

JN: So, you said you went to the schools in Ether until the seventh grade,

LJ: Correct.

JN: And then, where did you go to high school?

LJ: Star. And then I went to Elon College.

JN: OK. So how far was Elon College from where you grew up?

LJ: About 50 miles.

JN: And tell me about Elon.

LJ: Elon was a fun place, and Elon bragged to the fact that they have more successful students per capita than any other school in the United States. That's pretty good. But now it has gotten to be an exclusive school. But everybody worked when I went. Everybody was poor, because it was poor times. {5:57} My sister even went to school – well, my daddy helped the math teacher in high school, because he did not know math. He was a smart man but didn't know math. And he'd tell my brother, “take this home and get your daddy to work it and bring it back in the morning, so my daddy could work it! [Laughter]. And he'd take it back in the morning. Then he gave all of us scholarships, because he got to be the field manager for the college. So... [6:32]

JN: And that's how you got to Elon. So, what sort of things did you do on campus there? Were there

any recreational activities? What sort of entertainments did you get into?

LJ: Well, we played silly games like “Red Rover, Red Rover, Send Buster Brown Over.”

JN: In college?

LJ: (Nodding yes, and laughter) Well we didn’t have much to do. You don’t understand. We had movies on the weekends at the church.

JN: So they would come and play movies. And those were up-to-date movies?

LJ: Yes.

JN: Do you remember any ones in particular?

LJ: No, I don’t. Sorry.

JN: So what did you major in at Elon?

LJ: Home Economics.

JN: And was that a fairly typical field of study for women going to college?

LJ: Right. At the time when I was young, there was only three professions for a woman: teacher, secretary, and nurse. Take your choice. [7:38]

JN: And what were you choosing to do?

LJ: I don’t know.

JN: But you majored in home economics – what--- where would you have...?

LJ: Well, it would be to teach. But then after, before... I went to Washington to work. And then after that I was married. And then I worked in a newspaper office.

JN: Ah. So when did you finish at Elon?

LJ: I didn’t finish. I told you I was dumb.

JN: I don’t believe that. So, at what point did the war begin? Were you still at Elon when the war started?

LJ: Oh, we were having our Christmas dinner, getting ready to go home for the holidays, when the war broke out. And the dean’s fiancé was in Hawaii. He was an admiral on a ship in Hawaii. And one of my very best friends’ brother was over there also. When the war broke out, my brother-in-law had just finished college. And he went when I went up in the war year oh little darling... Uncle Sam was calling; I must go. But he walked from Sicily, Italy, and crossed the Rhine River into Germany. But it

took him three and a half years.

JN: And this was a brother-in-law? [9:21]

LJ: Yes. (Nodding yes.)

JN: So, a husband to one of your sisters.

LJ: Uh huh.

JN: So, at what point did you decide you wanted to join the military?

LJ: Well, I didn't join the military.

JN: Tell me about going to Virginia.

LJ: Well, I went to Raleigh, and they interviewed me. And then I got a job. And I went to Washington and I took the exam until I was too dumb to learn. But they thought I was smart. And they put me out to work. And I did like math problems. My problem is English. And one of the men asked me to study Japanese, because there was only two Japanese-speaking Americans when the war broke out. And had Japan have known what we know today, they could have taken the United States with no problem. (Snaps fingers.) But a good thing they didn't know.

JN: So you took that test, and that was for the signal corps.

LJ: Correct.

JN: And how did you score? [10:42]

LJ: In the top sixth. (Laughter). 500.

JN: So, you weren't so dumb. (Laughter).

LJ: They thought I was smart because I did that.

JN: Mmh hmm. OK. So, did that surprise you that you scored so well?

LJ: It did. I was shocked.

JN: And what sort of things were on the test? What sort of questions?

LJ: A lot of math. 'Cause my work was all in math. They just hit what I knew on the test.

JN: So you think it just sort of came naturally to you?

LJ: Uh huh. But I tell you another thing—knowing what I know today—I was right out of school. A lot of those people had PhDs, but I beat them out because they hadn't been to school in such a long time.

You understand that, don't you? I was in the habit of – used to learning – and they were not. [11:45]

JN: So, you took that test in Arlington, Virginia.

LJ: Correct.

JN: And once you'd taken the test, what happened after that?

LJ: Well, they put you out to work when you got too dumb to learn. They let you stay in there until you got too dumb to learn, and then they put you out on a job. This is true! And I was told—the first thing I was told was “if you mention even where you work, the penalty is death! You will be put in a firing squad.”

JN: So, how did that make you feel?

LJ: Good.

JN: Why?

LJ: I wasn't afraid. I never was afraid.

JN: Did it make you feel like you were doing something very important? [12:33]

LJ: Well, it was important. We were decoding messages. Actually, what I did was find the unknown, which was which category they go in. There was three categories. And once those three sergeants that worked there got the overlaps, and put them on there, they could read it, but we couldn't. You know...

JN: OK. So, when did you start this work? [13:02]

LJ: Just as soon as I got there. After I finished – after I got too dumb to learn.

JN: OK. So your title was Cryptographic Clerk.

LJ: Correct.

JN: OK, so could you explain that title to me? Cryptographic?

LJ: It means coding.

JN: OK. So you said you were grouping things into three categories.

LJ: Mmh hmm. (Nodding yes.)

JN: And what were those three categories?

LJ: Well, they were different—fit on different overlaps. That's what they called it. Once they put it on the overlap, they could read it. But you see those three little sergeants really was the brain.

JN: OK. And what sort of building were you working in? [13:48]

LJ: Well it used to be... It was at Arlington Station which used to be a girls' school. It was just a big old open room with desks kind of like this (makes sweeping gesture with hand), and we sat there and did work all day. Eight hours. But we had 45 minutes for lunch, and two 15 minute breaks. They said you can work better if you don't work too long. After a while, your mind gets stale.

JN: So tell me about riding the bus to work in the morning.

LJ: Well, I was riding the bus to work, and when I got ready to get off of the bus, a man on the bus says to me, he says "where do you all go when you get off and walk up that little path?" The bus driver winked at me and said, "they go play golf." This building was surrounded by a fence that was 12 feet high. And they had a system that picked up every sound within 10 feet. And then they went to investigate it. But we had a picture badge when we entered the building. We had to show that badge to get inside the gate, and then inside the building again. [15:14]

JN: Were there guards at the door?

LJ: Yes.

JN: So, why was this work so secretive?

LJ: Because, you see, we did not want the enemy to know what we were doing, that we were deciphering their code.

JN: So, how did the coded messages come into the place?

LJ: Well, we had soldiers, you know, that was in the signal corps, that picked up the messages from Japan – of course, I worked on Japan – picked up them in the field and brought them in.

JN: And what did it look like when you got it?

LJ: It just looked like a page of numbers. That's all it was, just numbers.

JN: And you said you were finding the overlaps?

LJ: Uh huh. Well, it's like doing algebra. You know, finding the unknown. It's like you were doing algebra all day.

JN: OK. You have to explain this very clearly, because I don't know math.

LJ: Oh, OK.

JN: So, I don't understand.

LJ: OK.

JN: You know what I mean?

LJ: Mmm hmm. It was just a bunch of numbers, and you deciphered them to find out the pattern. They were in like a pattern. And after we finished, they took this paper that we even figured on, shredded it, and put in a plane, and dumped it in the ocean, so nobody could find out what we were doing. No evidence.

JN: So, do you have any knowledge of the way that this was used to thwart Japan's... [17:11]

LJ: Well, one thing I'll tell you was there was this ship going into Cuba that was supposed to be loaded with ammunition, and it was – I mean it was supposed to be loaded with hospital supplies, but it was loaded with ammunition. We picked that up in the message, and intercepted, and there it was! Pulled that medical supplies down, and there it was! Enough to blow up Cuba! All of Cuba.

JN: So, do you know other examples like that?

LJ: Not right off I don't. Oh – a lot of it was troop movement. You know, where their troops were going. Incoming. And a lot of times we would send out airplanes to look, but we knew what was out there before we went, because we already had picked up where they were coming in – the Japanese planes were coming in. So they knew what they were coming into before they ever... And my husband worked on a carrier, and he said that some mornings they would send out 21 planes, which is what their carrier would handle, and two would come back. And they sat around the table. They did not ask or say or wonder who would be killed. It was who was coming back, because so few came back.

JN: So, with this cryptography, you were, in effect, staying one step ahead...

LJ: Right.

JN: ...of the Japanese. [19:00]

LJ: Trying to. We didn't always succeed, because they had a suicide plane that stripped the carrier that my husband was on in two. And he immediately died, you know. He had a bomb that would just split it wide open, and they repaired it at sea. And for a month, all he had to eat was pancakes. And they had bugs in them. He said you could hold them up and look like this, and there would be the bugs. And they all laughed and said that was meat! (Laughter).

JN: So, the ship went down because it had been hit...

LJ: No, it didn't go down. Uh uh. They repaired it at sea. [19:48]

JN: Ah, but your future husband survived.

LJ: Correct.

JN: Eating pancakes. With bugs in them.

LJ: For months!

JN: Oh my goodness!

LJ: And they made-- they had to be repaired at sea, so it took about a month to get the work done. So all the time that they were – they couldn't get supplies. So that's what they ate. And they had homemade syrup made out of vanilla, sugar, and water. Poured over them bugs! (Laughter.) So, you know, actually, people don't realize, but I will say one thing. America was together. America was together.

JN: Is that something that has changed, do you think?

LJ: I do. I do not think we all are together today. Do you?

JN: I'm leaving my opinion out of this recording.

LJ: But we are not all working together. You know that. On a lot of things.

JN: So, because the United States was facing enemies in different places around the world, there was more...

LJ: Unity!

JN: More unity. [21:10] So let's return to your work in the office – this secret office.

LJ: (Laughter)

JN: How much training did you do before you started working?

LJ: None.

JN: So you didn't need a lot of training.

LJ: No, I didn't. They told me what I had to do – that you figure out which group this goes in – and it was just like if your professor handed you a math problem. That's what it was. And then you worked on it.

JN: So, did you enjoy it?

LJ: I did. I loved it!

JN: So, those eight hour days didn't stretch out too long.

LJ: No, they didn't. Not for me they didn't. But, you know, we talk about integration. And we'll bring this in. I sat next to a colored girl that was a Howard graduate. She made the same amount of money I did. And I didn't know any difference, and we got to be friends. I was never taught that way. My parents taught me, “you're no better than anybody else, and nobody's better than you.” But we were friends.

JN: She was at Howard University [23:31]...

LJ: Mmm hmm.

JN: ...in Washington.

LJ: Mmm hmm.

JN: So, what was the ratio of men to women in the office?

LJ: All women. Except the sergeants, but they were not in my office. It wasn't exactly an office. It would be like this room, only bigger. It was an enormous room, and everybody is sitting around like this man (points behind the camera), and we were doing math.

JN: So, you said that you made friends with one young woman. Did you make other friends in there?

LJ: Oh yeah.

JN: Close friendships?

LJ: Yeah. One of my other friends was a – her daddy was an ambassador from Israel. She was Jewish. She grew up in Warben Park Motel – Hotel, and she went to Vassar (laughter), but we were friends. She taught me about Washington (coughing). She grew up there. But when the war ended – you want to hear about the ending of the war?

JN: Yes, please. [23:47].

LJ: Well, when the war ended, we went down to 14th and Pennsylvania. Most people know where that is, because it's the most famous street in Washington. And there was enough of – soldiers, sailors, whatnot-- that the street car came down on the track – they just picked it up and set it on the side. They said, “this street belongs to the United States Service Personnel!” And we began to dance. (Laughter). We were all so happy.

JN: And then you proceeded into a hotel, correct?

LJ: No. I was living there, so I just went home when it was over.

JN: But there was a hotel called the Statler?

LJ: The Statler Hotel – well they went up in the Statler Hotel, and they took a razor blade, and they just took the down pillows – you know what a down pillow is – and they ripped it open, and shook it all over – all over the street.

JN: So the streets were filled with feathers.

LJ: Feathers.

JN: So it sort of looked like confetti.

LJ: Well, that's what they were using it for.

JN: So, how long did the parties go on? [25:02]

LJ: Mmmh... Several days. (Laughter). It was exciting! We got on the train and went to New York the next morning, but it wasn't as much fun, so we came back to Washington. Washington was more fun, and more excited than any place. It was very exciting! We had the most – you know, more parades. The best one I remember was Nimitz, Admiral Nimitz. They came in with planes in formation-- you know, wing to wing. And all we had almost all them movie stars, and all them kind of plays. Generals – we had parades for. It was really exciting! We had them over at the Washington Monument – you know where the Washington Monument is. It was big then, but now they have added a lot of things to the Washington Monument territory around it.

JN: Other memorials.

LJ: Mmm hmm.

JN: Including the memorial to veterans of World War II, [26:24] which is fairly close to the Washington Monument.

LJ: Mmm hmm. Mmm hmm.

JN: So let's talk about Washington during those – during the war years. You know, you were doing work eight hours a day, but did you do anything for fun?

LJ: Oh yeah!

JN: What sort of things?

LJ: Well, I remember going to the theater, movies, church – in Washington, DC. We'd get on the bus and go, you know. And by the way, I had a bus pass that I could ride in the street car for a week for a dollar.

JN: That's amazing! So cheap.

LJ: Uh huh. So, we did some – Glen Echo was, you know – I don't know if they had Glen Echo anymore. It was an amusement park.

JN: In Washington.

LJ: Mmm hmm. And a lot of places in Washington, people don't know about. And one is – they have a copy of Palestine with the catacombs and all that, and they have monks, you know, walking around in the – in the museum, I guess it is. And they have everything like it is in Israel.

JN: So that's something that you remember going to?

LJ: I remember going there. Everything else I think most people have been to.

JN: Was there a time during the war when people said, you know, "I think we'll be able to come out of this OK, or was it sort of touch and go the whole time?"

LJ: I really don't know about that, but, you know, Harry Truman was really good. He was my favorite president. And he gave a lot of credit to the service personnel and gave them education. You know, he paid for their education, if you remember that. I think you can do that still. I'm not sure.

JN: The GI Bill.

LJ: Mmm hmm.

JN: So many people who had served in the military were able to come home...

LJ: And go to school for free.

JN: So colleges were really packed...

LJ: Mmm hmm.

JN: ...after the war.

LJ: They were. Mmm hmm. And they have been pretty packed since. Before that, very few people were able to go to college, because they didn't have the money. You know, money was (makes needy snapping motion with fingers) like this. And if you could survive and have enough to eat, you were in good shape. That's all you asked for. But what's the matter with our country today is the love of the almighty dollar. People do almost anything for a dollar. They will tell things about our country they have no business telling-- [29:32] or anything. You know that. We do not have a united United States anymore. I don't think. That's my own personal opinion.

JN: OK. So let's talk about you. You were celebrating for several days after the war.

LJ: Correct.

JN: And, can you tell me about meeting your future husband? When was that?

LJ: Well, I met my husband after I left the Signal Corps. I moved – I worked for the VA for a while with medical records.

JN: And where were you working for the Veterans' Administration?

LJ: Downtown Washington.

JN: And who were you working alongside?

LJ: I don't remember. I don't remember that. Anyway, one of the people that I worked with introduced me to my husband. That's how I met him. She was also from North Carolina. She was from Wilson, or

Greenbowl, I think. I'm not sure. And that's how I met my husband. It was through her. And he was stationed at Bethesda, Maryland. He did electrocardiogram on Cordell Hole.

JN: Really? And what was your husband's name?

LJ: James Randolph Jordan.

JN: So how long did you, you know, date?

LJ: About a year. But he was also sitting out on the water when they raised the flag on Iwo. Out in-- on the carrier. Half of the carrier medics went to the shore. Half of them were killed. And then after the war – after they raised the flag, he went and picked up survivors. [31:27]

JN: Was he a medic?

LJ: Mmm hmm. He was a medic.

JN: And...

LJ: He did the suture. The doctor would take care of whatever, and then they'd shove him over, and he went two or three days without food. Somebody would hold a sandwich, and he'd bite it, and that's how much – He got no sleep. They kept a cigarette in his mouth, and when it was time to eat, he just ate sandwiches, and they held it out so he could bite it and eat it. That's how busy they were.

JN: So so many soldiers coming in with major injuries.

LJ: Correct.

JN: And he was constantly suturing.

LJ: Correct.

JN: OK. Can you tell me about your wedding?

LJ: Well, I got married in my old farmhouse, where I was born.

JN: Oh, I see, so you had – you left DC and got married back in North Carolina.

LJ: Correct.

JN: So tell me about leaving...

LJ: North Carolina?

JN: Leaving Washington, DC.

LJ: OK. Well, you know, today they say how people, you know, say things about people they worked for and then – but I just thought they always teased me, and I just thought it was because they liked me.

I never made any more sense than that. (Laughter). You know, and when I got ready to go, they were going to follow the bus so that when I threw my shoes out – because people in North Carolina didn't wear shoe-- that they would be there to catch them for their wives. (Laughter). I just looked back at them, and I said, "I'm going to North Carolina to raise taters, and maters, and onions, and young 'uns." (Lots of laughter).

JN: So, did you go back – you went back to Ether...

LJ: I went back to Wilson [33:23].

JN: To Wilson?

LJ: Uh huh, because I got married.

JN: But you got married in your old farmhouse in Ether.

LJ: (Nodding yes). Old farmhouse in Ether.

JN: Tell me about the wedding.

LJ: Well, the wedding was just a wedding. Just simple. Didn't have a big wedding, no. Had a minister and family.

JN: And your-- where was your husband from in North Carolina?

LJ: Wilson. That's on the coast. And I grew up in the Piedmont. (Cough). North Carolina has three sections. Coastal. Piedmont. Mountain.

JN: OK, so, in Wilson, your husband, he started working at a drug firm? [34:08] Is that correct?

LJ: No, he started working at – they thought he was going to have this little dry cleaning plant, but it didn't pan out, so then he – we moved to Richmond.

JN: Oh, I see.

LJ: And then he got a job for the drug firm in Richmond, and we moved back to North Carolina. We moved to Washington while he was working for this other firm. And we lived in six states.

JN: Tell me. Tell me all of them.

LJ: OK. First we lived in North Carolina. Left North Carolina and went to Virginia. From Virginia, we went to Ohio. Ohio to West Virginia. West Virginia, we came back to North Carolina. Then we went to Louisiana, and Georgia.

JN: And this was because of his job.

LJ: Correct. Got transferred, and I had an offer to go to California-- well my husband-- they wanted

him to. They tried to beg me into it, but I did not want to grow my children up in Los Angeles. I didn't think it would be a very nice place. But that was just me. (Nods head). You know, they offered me a ticket, a membership to the country club that all the stars belonged to – movie stars! But that's not the kind of life I want.

JN: So, your husband – he was offered a job in Los Angeles...

LJ: Well, a transfer, really.

JN: OK. And they offered you a membership, trying to tempt you to move to Los Angeles?

LJ: Mmm hmm.

JN: OK. But you said “no.”

LJ: I said, “No.”

JN: So how did you feel about moving to, you know, Virginia, and Ohio, and West Virginia. How did you feel about moving all those times?

LJ: Well, for one thing, my children do super on aptitudes. And I lay that to their learning from different people from different states. That's what I think. You know, there's more to be learned than what's in a book. (Laughs).

JN: So, you said you worked for a time at the newspaper in Wilson, North Carolina.

LJ: Correct.

JN: And what was that called?

LJ: Wilson Daily Times.

JN: So what did you do there? [36:37].

LJ: Oh, I did bookkeeping.

JN: And how long did you do that?

LJ: Oh maybe-- maybe a year. I'm not sure. Don't quote me. (Laughter).

JN: And that was after you had first moved back to North Carolina...

LJ: After I was married and moved to North Carolina. That was what was available, so that's what I did.

JN: So, how did you end up in Rome, Georgia?

LJ: Well, because my daughter lives here. After my husband died, I moved to Rome. Because I had lost my – I gave up my driver's license, so I came up here to be with her. And Georgia, you see, is about the middle of my children. Some live in Northern Virginia. Some live in Louisiana.

JN: Tell me about your four kids. [37:36]

LJ: What about them?

JN: What are their names?

LJ: The oldest one is named Lillian after my husband's mother. He lost his mother when he was 15. So he wanted his first child named after his mother. I don't like the name, but I couldn't, you know, deny him what he wanted. And then I have Neil Randolph. And then I have Virginia – no, Laura. And then I have Virginia Brooks.

JN: And you live close to Virginia now.

LJ: Correct. She was born in Virginia, but that's not why she's named Virginia. She's named after my sister Virginia.

JN: I see. So you said your husband passed away about nine years ago.

LJ: Something like that.

JN: And he had something like over a thousand books...

LJ: Yes, he did.

JN: ...in his collection. So, were you both readers?

LJ: He read – sometimes at night he would be in – well, anyway, he got wounded during the war, but he didn't get a purple heart, because it wasn't by enemy gunshot. If he had been in the army he would have. But he was carrying a wounded soldier in his arms and jumped from a landing craft to the carrier. And the water came like that (makes clapping motion) and mashed his leg in two. But he was young, so they strung him up and grew him, and he didn't even limp, but he had lots of pain.

JN: What do you mean, “strung him up and grew him?”

LJ: You know how they string them up, and pull your leg, and it grows some more? Well, that's what they did to him!

JN: He had some more growing to do.

LJ: Uh huh.

JN: So, did he suffer from that injury later in life?

LJ: Always. He'd get up – as I was going to say, he'd get up at night and walk the floor. But you

couldn't tell that he even had an injury. But, you see, they grew that bone, and that hurt.

JN: So, how many grandchildren do you have?

LJ: Eight grandchildren, and one little great-grandchild that lives in Italy. My – our granddaughter and her husband went to UVA together-- University of Virginia. And he was from Italy, and he played golf for the University of Virginia, and they met and fell in love, and married, and moved to – first she moved to London. She had an international scholarship-- could speak several languages-- so she moved to London, England, and was there a while. And they would fly back and forth on weekends. So they just – she gave up her job and went to Italy to live with her husband. And they have a little boy. Cuter than a button! (Laughter). So cute!

JN: And that's your only great-grandchild?

LJ: That's the only one. He's about 18 month.

JN: OK. So you live in Rome. And how did you become involved in the American Rosie the Riveter Association?

LJ: Well, I knew about the Riveters all the time when it first started, but I didn't think I'd qualify because it said “riveters,”” but I didn't rivet. I did none of that kind of work. [41:19]. What I did was not really a man's job in the first place. And the riveters were the ones who took men's jobs, you know. And I like to say – that Jane and I say – we got women out of the kitchen, because women did not have... Now, women are CEOs. My mother would have made an excellent CEO had she had the opportunity.

JN: Why is that?

LJ: Because she knew how to manage people. And you have to manage people. And that is one of Carter's problems-- President Carter's. He didn't know how to manipulate people – get them to do what he wanted them to do. He had a lot of excellent ideas, but nobody would listen.

JN: Because he wasn't a good manager.

LJ: That's right.

JN: So, you, Jane, and thousands – millions of other women at that time were really in many ways responsible for all of the women CEOs we see today...

LJ: That's right.

JN: ...women serving in higher government positions...

LJ: Women used to do all the work and the men got credit. They were the secretaries, but they did all the work, and the men got credit. To tell you the truth, that's the way it was.

JN: So, going off of that, why do you think it's important to share these memories [42:53] from World War II.

LJ: Maybe we could learn from our mistakes. They had maneuvers on our farm during the war, and my daddy learned one thing. Yankee men were no different from Southern men. You see, he always thought of Yankees as sort of different, but they would come to our old farmhouse, and go in, and my mother made them chicken stew, which they had never had and never heard of, and they'd pop popcorn and peanuts, and sit in the house, and he learned to like them, that they were no different. You know, the same thing. But, you see, there was a little bit of feeling between the South and the North, and the war really helped soften that, because they were put together and made friends. My husband had a friend clear on up till he died that he was in the service with from New Jersey. And, you see, they intermingled in the service, and it taught that they were no different. And they are not any different! They have good ones and bad ones. We have good ones and bad ones.

JN: So, you think the second world war helped to change some of that.

LJ: I do. I think the second world war did more for this country than anybody. I really do. Our generation did more for this country than any other generation. And a lot of things happened in our generation, starting way back – no, the automobile was already – we had a F-- this is another thing. We had an automobile before the Depression. But all the time it was parked in the garage because we didn't have 10 cents to buy gas!

JN: So, it was useless without gas.

LJ: Uh huh. It just sat there for years, and years, and years, and years. It was one of those old fashioned, you know, that you put down a buckle during the storm (laughter). Let it down like a canvas. (Laughter).

JN: So, do you tell your story today when you go to these Rosie the Riveter meetings and get-togethers? Do you share your stories from the war?

LJ: Yes, we do. That's what we do.

JN: So, you've already been involved in that?

LJ: Well, we've already made a documentary, and my daughter-in-law filed it in the archives in New Orleans-- you know, the World War II Archives there.

JN: At the D-Day Museum in New Orleans?

LJ: Mmm hmm.

JN: Well, wonderful. Is there anything else you want to share, Ms. Jordan?

LJ: Well, I don't think of anything. Didn't I give you enough information?

JN: You sure did. Well, I want to thank you for sharing your memories today, and we will end it there.

LJ: What?

JN: We're going to end it right there.

LJ: OK.

JN: Excellent.