

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Mary McJunkin Interview

Conducted by Adina Langer

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Transcribed by Camille Coe

Mary McJunkin lived during through the Great Depression and WWII. She married Guy McJunkin in 1941 and soon after he was drafted into the US Army. She followed him when he was transferred to several bases, including to California, Kentucky, and Oklahoma. Mary worked at an airplane plant during part of WWII, as well as at various other jobs.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: Today is March 29th, 2016 and I am here at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. My name is Adina Langer and I am the curator at the Museum of History and Holocaust Education. Could you please state your full name?

McJunkin: Mary Howell McJunkin.

Interviewer: When and where were you born?

McJunkin: In Rome, Georgia, on 82nd street is where I lived. I was born at home. I was born on August the 30th, 1921.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your family?

McJunkin: Yes, it was four girls and four boys. We lived about a half a block from the school. Then, you didn't have lunchrooms and you had, you went home or somebody had to bring food to you at school or you took it with you. But we could go home for lunch because we were only a half a block from school, from the first to the fifth grade. Then to Neely School which was right above that and then the high school was still where you could walk to it.

Interviewer: Where in this grouping of siblings did you fit? Were you the top, the bottom, the middle?

McJunkin: I was close to the bottom because it was, I was the third one from the small, the six-year-old and then the nine, and I was twelve when my mother passed away.

Interviewer: So, before your mother passed away, was she a homemaker? Did she—

McJunkin: Oh yes! People back then, women didn't work like they do now, you know. And with that many children. Yeah, we had a good growing up part because we lived in a— on right off of Broad Street but it was a dead-end street on that end. The church was down there, and we could go in through the back part of, to get to the church. The school was right above, so, we didn't have to, and we weren't

allowed to go off of our, you know, from our street. We couldn't go anywhere else.

Interviewer: What did your father do?

McJunkin: He was a painter. He did—he had people that worked for him too. He was the head one. The city clock that's in Rome, I don't know if you ever saw a picture of the city clock in Rome. Well, he used to paint that.

Interviewer: Did he have all sorts of special equipment to get up there?

McJunkin: Yeah, he had big ladders to get up there.

Interviewer: And can you say—.

McJunkin: Well you can walk up in it now, you know, they've got steps and you can go up in it.

Interviewer: That's very cool. Can you say what your father's full name was?

McJunkin: It was Jesse James Howell.

Interviewer: And how about your mother?

McJunkin: Her name was Lottie. [name not confirmed] Lottie Almo.

Interviewer: And so, when your mother passed away, did you have to—did you keep going to school or did you have to stop?

McJunkin: I was in the uh, I went to school until I was in the eighth grade. And my older sister, the oldest sister was married and had a baby and couldn't do it, you know, take all of us on. [laughs] My other sister that was older than me had to quit school because we didn't have anybody. Had a six-year-old child, that had to, and an eight-year-old sister that had to be taken care of. So I told her after I kept going and I said you just have too much to do because I said, that's too much for you, I'm going to quit. And I quit, but I went back and got my diploma later, because—. I just felt like she just had too much to do because back then you didn't have washing machines and things and all that stuff. And you cooked three meals a day too.

Interviewer: What was, what was a typical day like for you and your sister when you were taking care of the children?

McJunkin: Well we, it was not, we didn't have difficulties as much but we, you know we got by. [laughs] We, we did real good.

Interviewer: And at this point, the stock market would have crashed, the Great Depression had started. Did you feel the effects of that? Did it affect your father's business?

McJunkin: No, he, he was real strict with us. We had to, we couldn't go get the car and go with anybody, not with a boy! Even after we got bigger, you know, older and going to church they said well, we'll just drive you home. I said, we can't. You can walk with me home, but you can't, I can't get in the car! So he'd have to walk home with me. [laughs]

Interviewer: So going back just a little bit, the Great Depression had just started. The big stock market had crashed. Did your father's business, did he have trouble because of the economic downturn at that time?

McJunkin: Well back then, everything was doing that. That people, you got by though. You didn't have a lot of things but you got by.

Interviewer: You've mentioned now, church a couple of times. What church did you belong to?

McJunkin: McDonald, Mark McDonald Church, Baptist Church. Because it was right, we could just walk down it. The front face of it was on 8th avenue but the back of it was to 82nd so we'd go in the back way and go around or go up the front, either one.

Interviewer: Do you have any memories of what a church service was like? Were there lots of people there?

McJunkin: Oh yeah! Mm-hmm. It had a great little teacher too. Until she passed away, we were real good friends, even though I had moved, you know, I was in California. But then we moved out of that district and went to another church but when we moved back over in that area, she was still living.

Interviewer: Do you remember her name?

McJunkin: Miss Lilly Smith.

Interviewer: So, you mentioned a little bit what it was like to meet a boy have him walk you home. What was your social life like? You must have been so busy.

McJunkin: [laughs] Uh, yeah, we had, we did a lot of things, but we just weren't allowed to get in a car and ride with boys! [laughter].

Interviewer: So how did you meet your husband?

McJunkin: He went to church where I went to—but I didn't want him to sit by me and I'd make girls come and sit by me.

Interviewer: Was that because you were shy or because you liked him?

McJunkin: I just, I just [laughter] I don't know but I remember doing that.

Interviewer: What was his name?

McJunkin: Guy.

Interviewer: So, what was your, your courtship like? You got married in 1941, right?

McJunkin: Yeah, we got married right before the war started. He was drafted right after we got married.

Interviewer: Do you remember, how did he ask you to marry him?

McJunkin: Well, I— when we decided we were going to get it, uh, later, but his brother was going to get married. He had surgery and he uh, he wanted him to get married at the same time, so he said would you marry me then. I said well I guess so.

Interviewer: Did you get married in that church?

McJunkin: Uh, we got married at the pastor's house.

Interviewer: Did you have family there?

McJunkin: No, he didn't want anybody, but some people found out and they, they got there and we didn't know it. [laughs]

Interviewer: So, at this time did you have a sense of what was going on in the world, that war might be coming soon?

McJunkin: Well, we didn't really think about it to begin with but then when it did, then that's when they started—the war started, you know, in Germany. And that's when he was drafted.

Interviewer: And do you remember when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor? Do, do you have a memory of that happening?

McJunkin: Of what?

Interviewer: When the Japanese attacked—.

McJunkin: Oh yeah! It—we were, we were really upset about it, you know. Because the attack did—um. And so he was drafted right away and we had not been married very long.

Interviewer: What—before he went into the Army, what were your hopes and dreams? Did you—.

McJunkin: Well see, he didn't go until the last—he stayed in the states and he was in the, uh—anti-aircraft and they sent him to guard the ocean in California. And that's where he was stationed at and so that's where we lived. He wanted me to come out there.

Interviewer: So, before we get into that, how did you find out that he was drafted? How did he find out that he was called up?

McJunkin: When he was called up. Well, the war had, you know they had bombed Pearl Harbor. So, everybody in that age knew they had to go because they already had to sign up and he got drafted right away because he was just right in that. So when he got, when they got sent to California, he went to San Pedro first. And he called and he said I want you to come out here and I said I—I don't think I come that far. [laughs] But he said I want you to and he said it's another boy and his wife are in Atlanta. I want you to call her and you would have somebody to come out here with you. So, I called her and we went out together.

Interviewer: Did you know anybody else in the service? Did, did your brothers go into the Army too?

McJunkin: Uh, yes. My sister's husband had to go. And they had two children and he had to go. And my brothers, and uh, all my brothers had to go. I had one brother that passed away when he was nineteen and the other three had to go, they all were drafted.

Interviewer: All into the Army? Or into other branches?

McJunkin: Well different ones. Some were in the Army, some were in, uh—I can't even think of—Navy! And then another one was in another unit of the Army.

Interviewer: So, tell me about getting in touch with the other woman and planning this trip to California.

McJunkin: Yeah, we had uh, apartments all along the road close to their town. And so we, they were from Alabama, and one was from Georgia. It was four of us. So when they would not get very much time off, we could go to there because we were right in that vicinity. If you lived there, you could go and go to the camp because it was not— not a big Army camp. They had been sent to Manhattan Beach so they, that's where we went to live there. And it, we could go over when I got off of work I could go over and uh, see him. But you know, he couldn't leave from there but he could, I could go over. And that's what we did.

Interviewer: So, before you got to California, how did you get there? What did you do to travel across the country to California?

McJunkin: Well I knew the people. I didn't even think about the train, and you didn't fly back then like you, you know, now. But the bus station—and I knew them, and I just called and went down and asked him about how to—what route would I go. The girl in Atlanta that wanted her husband, wanted her to come out. I—he said—I said so make me out a route and I'll just go to Atlanta and meet her and then she can get the same route and we can go together and that's what we did. So, we stayed together for a long, long time.

Interviewer: How long did it take you to get from Atlanta to California?

McJunkin: [laughs] A whole week! It took a whole week. And she'd say let's go out of the bus station before the next—and I said I'm not leaving from here. You could eat there and everything and then you could go and sponge off. You couldn't take a bath but you could get cleaned up. I said I'm not leaving out of here because what you might run into. [laughs]

Interviewer: How far from home had you been before this trip?

McJunkin: No! Chattanooga, Birmingham. [laughs] No, Atlanta. You know, that was as far as I'd ever gone.

Interviewer: So can you tell me about the moment you arrived in California? Was your husband there?

McJunkin: Uh, he was to meet me— me and her. They were to meet, he was to meet us and when we got there, they weren't there. He was not there. He said he called and told the girl there that he was supposed to be there but the put him on duty and he didn't get to come and the other guy, her husband, he would be getting off and he could come but it would be the next morning. And I said, what are we gonna do. And that place closed, it didn't stay open at night for we went into out of Los Angeles. And he said—she said I don't know. I said well there's a hotel right across the road. I said well let's go over there because they are going to close at night there. I said we can't stay here. I said let's go over there and get a room. Well, we got over there and there was the sweetest girl. She said I am so sorry we are just booked completely up. And I said we have got to have a place to stay. I said because they can't pick us up until the morning and they had a place that they had got for three days. And I said we can't go to it and I said we've got to have a place to stay the night. They're closing over there, and she was so sweet and she called everywhere trying to find an empty one who could take us in but it being war I guess it was just booked up. She said well, I'm going to call the YWCA. She said that lady is real good and she called her and she said yes she would take us. But she didn't have an empty room but she kept cots in the basement and you could take a shower and sleep and she'd be glad to have us over there. The

sweetest lady and she was a southern lady on top of that! She was so sweet. So, we couldn't find a place the next day. You know, we stayed the three days and we still walked and walked and walked the three days trying to find somewhere to move to. Nobody would even talk to you if you opened, you know, they came to the door if you were a soldier, they just didn't—I think they'd had some trouble with people. So, we couldn't find a place for three days. We walked and walked and couldn't find a place. The lady at the YWCA, she said well I can keep you in the cots downstairs till you can find a place and she helped us find a place because she knew a southern lady that would take us in. She—we got to go there. And when we—he got transferred we found a place to live.

Interviewer: So you, um, this was in San Pedro. How long was he in San Pedro?

McJunkin: Uh he, we left San Pedro. He didn't get to have, he got sent to Manhattan Beach. I didn't know where Manhattan Beach was at [laughs]. So, I uh, he told me he wanted me to come over there and I said well, I—I have to—we've got to find a place to live before I can leave and come over from here. So, I said we've got to go over this Manhattan Beach now so I've got to go find a place and move. So, we found a place and moved—I moved up and I didn't have anything but my suitcase.

Interviewer: So you got a job at an airplane factory, is that right?

McJunkin: I went to the uh—I did work when I first went out there before I moved. You know, while I was at San Pedro at the uh, aircraft plant. But they couldn't transfer me when he got sent over to Manhattan Beach and I thought, well I've got to get another job. So uh, it was just a little small town and it didn't have much in it. It had a couple, some restaurants and restaurants then would have to close one day. They couldn't stay open because of the rationing. So, I thought well I've got to get a job, I can't stay out here till I get a job. So, I thought, well I'll just go start out at the first place and just go all around the little part here that could hire somebody. First place I went into was a little bakery, and I had never worked, never baked—worked in a bakery or anything but the lady hired me right on and put me in charge of all the women who were already there. I went in early and did the donuts and the uh— well I can't even think of the rolls and stuff like that. They had to get ready after the bakers got through with them, I'd do the donuts and stuff.

Interviewer: Were there special recipes you had to follow because of sugar rationing or you know, other things like that?

McJunkin: Oh yeah, yeah you could not. You just got so much of those little things to get sugar with. I'd save mine till he had time off and I was going to be able to fix something that— yeah, I'd keep mine to do that. Because I worked in that bakery and it's a lot of sugar in there [laughs]. So, I didn't even eat the sweet stuff because I said being with it, you didn't even care for it.

Interviewer: Did the bakery have to deal with not having enough of these ingredients or were they able to get—?

McJunkin: Yes, they—they did. They could get more than, rations than we could. They did bread and everything, and cakes and everything. They were the best two people that ever were, that owned it. They, they just really took us in. Kept us, just, just like my mom and dad.

Interviewer: Do you remember their names?

McJunkin: Uh, Janie what was their names, do you remember? [speaks to daughter] Its been so many—after all, I was young. But we stayed in touch a long, long time.

Interviewer: So I want to go into this a little bit more, but before that, I want to talk a little bit about that airplane factory. How did you find the job there?

McJunkin: Well, I just, when I got there I thought well I, there's not much around here to do, to get except restaurants and you know, they closed, they couldn't stay open every day. So, I thought I've got to have a job. You know, if I don't find it here I'd go down to next, it was three beaches right along the row.

Interviewer: No, I mean that's, that's great. Um, but I am thinking before you even got there, the airplane plant. How did you find that job?

McJunkin: Well, the girl that was from Mobile. She had worked in Alabama there at that one and she said come and go out there. And I did and I got a job and I worked while we were there.

Interviewer: And what did you do? What were your duties at the plant?

McJunkin: At that one, they put me on the assembly line. I was not already, I didn't know anything about that stuff, and I kept cutting my fingers, you know, with the pieces of metal. So, they gave me a thing that looked like a washing machine ringers—and had those little, same little things. And all I had to do was pick them up and put them in that. I didn't have to scrape, I just had to put them in that and it mashed it down. That's what I did, that's while I was there.

Interviewer: What were your co-workers like? Were they mostly women or all different kinds of people?

McJunkin: Well they were some women, and some, some men sometimes but women usually. But yeah, but then when then when I got transferred, he got transferred I didn't have a way to get out there, I went on the Greyhound bus. I had to catch it that morning and set up, I went to work that night. By the time I'd get back home, I, if I'd go ride the Greyhound I'd have to get back over—.

Interviewer: How long was your shift? How many hours a day did you work?

McJunkin: I worked from eleven at night to seven the next morning. That's when I was working at the airplane.

Interviewer: So, you probably didn't get to see your husband very much at all.

McJunkin: [laughs] No, but the one I went to work for was just really great. Anytime he had time off, I'd be off.

Interviewer: This was at the bakery?

McJunkin: Mm-hmm

Interviewer: So, what did you do for entertainment, did you ever go to an event or program sponsored by the USO? Was that—?

McJunkin: Well yeah but that, usually the married ones didn't go to the USO with their family or their wives there. We went in it one time but I never did go back, you know, he didn't go anyway. We didn't go back because that was for the people that were, you know, that didn't have their family there or were not married, most of them were young.

Interviewer: So, what did you guys do?

McJunkin: Well we'd go to a movie sometimes, but we'd go to the beach if we wanted to. Because he didn't get much time off either. I could go see him at the camp because we got a place right, where he was in the area. Because that was a small camp he got sent to. They guarded the, we couldn't go in the ocean right there where we lived because that was where the anti-aircraft rifle was and it shoots over that so, we couldn't go in. We'd have to go down to Redondo or the other one and—.

Interviewer: Sounds dangerous. Did you feel frightened by that or did you feel safe?

McJunkin: No! I figured they knew what they were doing. If they came up over there they just blacked out anyway. You know, all of it was blacked out, couldn't have lights that went toward the ocean. See, I was right on the ocean. So—.

Interviewer: How did you, did you learn about what was going on in the war at that time, were there newsreels—?

McJunkin: Yeah, uh, we had a radio but not a television. A radio. We would have known through them what was going on too.

Interviewer: Did you listen to Roosevelt's Fireside Chats on the radio?

McJunkin: Uh-huh, yeah. We played the radio a lot.

Interviewer: When you went to the movies, do you remember seeing newsreels or anything like that before the feature film would start? Were there newsreels about what was going on in the war?

McJunkin: Yeah, they'd show somethings. A lot of times they would take the soldiers down to the movie in a bus but uh, he'd call and say come on down. He could sit with me in the movie, but he had to ride down and ride back with them.

Interviewer: So how long was he there in Manhattan Beach? How long did you guys, did you live there?

McJunkin: We were there a long time. And when he left from there, we would not have left if his brother had not got shot. He was in the war and they had sent him home and they gave him, they called, the Red Cross called and said let him come back to his brothers. Then he, from there he was sent to Kentucky. Then I went out to Kentucky.

Interviewer: In all this time, before you went to Kentucky, were you still living nearby your friend from Mobile?

McJunkin: Yeah, we were still, I was still out there and I had to come home because I couldn't—wouldn't stay out there and him not there.

Interviewer: Um, I just wanted to—your friend, I didn't get her name. Your friend from Mobile, Alabama, what was her name?

McJunkin: Uh, just a minute. I have to sit—her daughter. I uh, one of her daughter's is still living. She's moved in close to Rome now. Pat Gunn was her name. Yeah.

Interviewer: When your husband was transferred to Kentucky, this was after he had gone home to Rome to see his brother?

McJunkin: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: And his brother, was he out of the Army at that point, after he got shot or just on leave?

McJunkin: No, I lived in Kentucky too while he was there. But I couldn't get to that camp because it was way out, the camp was. He could come if I lived there, he could when he had the time off, he could get a ride up to where I was at. [laughs] I never could go out to where he was at.

Interviewer: I just was curious, right before you went to Kentucky, what was the homecoming with his brother like in Rome?

McJunkin: Yeah, he uh, that, uh. He was just shot in the foot but he didn't have to go back into the service. So, he, that's when he got transferred. He probably would have stayed on out in California if it hadn't been for that but they had him report back and he got sent overseas too, right at the end. And the war ended there but then he was sent back to go to the Pacific and it got, it finished right after he got there.

Interviewer: Wow, that's a really—.

McJunkin: Yeah!

Interviewer: So before all that, when you were in Kentucky, what did you do in Kentucky? Did you have another job in Kentucky?

McJunkin: Yes [laughs] I had another job. I—it was a little store because it was a little country town. I never did get to the camp, Fort Campbell. But it was a little town and it was a grocery store. They fixed sandwiches for the children who came up from the school, that school there, to eat at lunchtime. They sold oil, kerosene, and oil, and all— gas but inside they had other stuff. I was living in a house with an older lady and I had a bedroom and I could use the kitchen. It had a well in the kitchen and I've lived—I never had a well [laughs] so I— and an outside bathroom, a privy or whatever they call it. And I thought oh my goodness Guy, he said, "well that's the only thing that's here. I had, I wanted you here and its one of the only things I could find and I had to cut her grass to get you the room." I said, well. So when I met the people at the store, they said, I said who—those buildings back here, that's apart like little houses. They said that he owned them and he always let the servicemen that was bigger wheels at the Army have them. I said, oh, I said I wonder how you could get one of them. He said well if you come work for me, you can have one of them. I said I'd be glad to. Me and another lady, he said he'd take her and me both and then we could get two of those cabins. They had kitchens and bathrooms and everything, I didn't have to do that. So we worked for them, they were the nicest people, him and her both. I really enjoyed it because they were so good to us and they were real good people.

Interviewer: Did they—what were you paid? Or were you just paid in board, like you could—.

McJunkin: I can't even remember but we got by on it because I only got \$50 from the Army. And that was enough to keep me from, you know, go back home.

Interviewer: What was it like to work in the store? Did people bring in their ration cards and you had to stamp them? How did that work?

McJunkin: Yeah, they would have so many, but most people tried to save them and you know, I did too. I'd save mine when Guy was in California so that we could go have something that I could get for us to have by not using them.

Interviewer: At the store, did you have to administer if folks came with their cards, is that how the bought things at the grocery store where you worked?

McJunkin: No, not where I worked, in a— not a—that there I worked in a bakery. And when I worked in the store it was a dress shop in Kentucky.

Interviewer: The dress shop is um—.

McJunkin: Oh, not Kentucky! But uh—.

Interviewer: —In Oklahoma, right?

McJunkin: It was um—what was that other place I went?

Janie [daughter]: Oklahoma.

McJunkin: Yeah, I worked in a dress shop.

Interviewer: So, when did you move to Oklahoma?

McJunkin: Unless it's in here, I can't' remember [laughs]. I'm getting where I can't remember all this stuff. [Riffling through papers] Where did you—.

[indecipherable talk in room]

Interviewer: Your husband was transferred to Oklahoma.

McJunkin: Yeah, that's the reason. But from there he, he was sent over after we had come home when his brother got shot. Then he—but the war ended uh, he had— So I didn't—after that, I stayed at home.

Interviewer: Do you remember what life was like in Oklahoma, when you worked at this dress shop? What was that like, working at the dress shop?

McJunkin: Well when I was working there, the three other, the couples—it was a big house. We rented a big house and each one of us had a bedroom and we could use the kitchen to—if anyone wanted to cook. Sometimes two of them might have a pass at the same time, overnight pass, and again they would and so—. We were three that lived together, us four lived together out in California so we got along real good.

Interviewer: So, it was the same folks in California that were out in Oklahoma?

McJunkin: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: And how did you get the job at the dress shop in Oklahoma?

McJunkin: I just went down trying to find a— because I had worked before at places like that so I just went down to see if I could get a job. And I got one in a dress shop. I just stayed at the register and they would bring the merchandise after they picked it up and I'd ring them up.

Interviewer: What town was this in Oklahoma? Do you remember the name of the town?

McJunkin: Uh, we went to see the rodeo. That was one of the things.

Daughter: Name of the town. Name of the town.

McJunkin: Oh. Gosh Janie, do you remember the name of it? [speaks to daughter]

Interviewer: What fort was your husband stationed at?

McJunkin: Fort Sill, was that—? Fort Sill in Oklahoma. Was that where it was at? After all, I'm getting were I can't—.

Interviewer: That's ok! Well, so tell me about the rodeo. You remember the rodeo, what was that like?

McJunkin: Yeah, yeah that was fun. Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Was it a big rodeo?

McJunkin: Yeah. There they have big ones.

Interviewer: How, how different was this where you had grown up? Did Oklahoma, did it seem different?

McJunkin: It was different, Uh-huh. California was really—we liked that better. We said we were coming back out there in a little but we didn't.

Interviewer: What did you like about California?

McJunkin: I liked California. Where we were at. We went into Los Angeles but we didn't get to get in there very much because we went a couple of times but not, because when he'd have a night off we didn't do all that. If there was a day we could go down to the beach, not where we were because you couldn't go in that one. But we would go down to the other beach.

Interviewer: Was it the weather you liked about California? Or was it something else?

McJunkin: Well the people there were really nice. And the weather was nice too.

Interviewer: Nicer than in Kentucky or Oklahoma?

McJunkin: Uh, no I didn't want to go back now. The people in Kentucky were, they were really nice. The ones I worked for. I really liked them. But as far as going back to Kentucky, no I liked [laughs].

Interviewer: So when your husband was done with all of this stateside work. Was he training in Oklahoma, was that a training base for him? Do you know what work he was doing in Oklahoma?

McJunkin: He worked on the plots out of the big guns, and that's what he did. He was in that part of it.

Interviewer: And he was learning how to work with it in Oklahoma?

McJunkin: In Oklahoma, yeah. He's—they plotted the course for the shooting and all.

Interviewer: So then the next thing that happened was he was transferred to Italy, right?

McJunkin: That's where—uh-huh he was.

Interviewer: And you went home to Rome?

McJunkin: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: What did he tell you about Italy? What did he tell you—.

McJunkin: Oh he liked it, he liked it. He was there when, uh, the two was—.

Janiee [daughter]: Mussolini. Mussolini.

McJunkin: Yeah, when they were hanging up, he got to see them.

Interviewer: When the people hung Mussolini in the, in the town square? He could see, he got to see that?

McJunkin: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: Wow, what did he—did he tell you anything about the crowd or did he did he tell you about that?

McJunkin: Yeah, uh, he really liked Italy. He thought that was a really nice place.

Janie [daughter]: Tell her about the people in the crowd. That hit them with their rifle butts.

McJunkin: I didn't hear what you said—what?

Interviewer: So um, your daughter just said that people in the crowd that hit, hit them with their rifle butts? Did your husband tell you about that story?

Janie [daughter]: Yes, the crowd was a large crowd and they would walk by and hit the—.

McJunkin: Yeah, yeah, yeah!

Janie [daughter]: Mussolini and the woman in the head with their rifle butts.

Interviewer: Wow, so he told you about these folks who would—.

McJunkin: Yeah, he, he really—was uh—.

Interviewer: He remembered that?

McJunkin: Yeah, he told me all about that. He said that was really, you know, it was something to see something like that.

Interviewer: And so, what were you doing then in Rome when he was in Italy?

McJunkin: I went to work [laughs]. I had to get a job. You just couldn't live on fifty dollars, so I went to work in a dress shop down on Broad Street.

Interviewer: Also working at the cash register, do um, at the register at the dress shop?

McJunkin: Yeah, and I could help—I decorated the window and the models, you know, things like that. Stuff like that.

Interviewer: Did rationing affect people's ability to buy clothes—during the war?

McJunkin: Oh, they could buy clothes, yeah. It was just food mostly. But by then, it was different, up from the rationing that—while it was so bad, you know.

Interviewer: At the end of the war, it seemed like it wasn't as bad, the rationing?

McJunkin: Later on. After—see after that war one ended, the other one was still going on in the Pacific.

Interviewer: So did you get letters from your husband while he was in Europe.

McJunkin: Uh-huh. Little emai—, those little [motions square with hands] [laughs]—.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about what it was like to get letters?

McJunkin: Yeah, he talked about how much he missed us. Then— but he really—I told him one other change we had to go to Italy, let's go back to where you were at. And he said, “no I don't want to.”

Interviewer: So, how else did you learn about the war, other than the letters you got from your husband. Did, did you still listen to the radio a lot?

McJunkin: Yes, that's what we listened to. But the war was about over when he went over anyway because all those other times he was guarding the coast. When he got moved when his brother had got shot and come home, that's when he got moved from there so in the other unit he was a different unit, and it was not the same group.

Interviewer: Do you remember the end of the war in Europe, you know when you found out that Germany had surrendered? Um, do you, was there a celebration in Rome?

McJunkin: Not celebrate—I wasn't celebrating because I knew if that one ended the other one was still going on in— and you didn't know. And so see, he got sent home and was on his way back over to the—there and the war ended there so that made it so much better. He was back in the states but he was to be sent there.

Interviewer: So he was in the states getting ready to go to the Pacific when the war ended?

McJunkin: Uh-huh. I was back in Rome then.

Interviewer: What do you remember about that, the end, the dropping of the bombs on Japan? Do you remember that?

McJunkin: Yeah, they were really—Pearl Harbor was really, uh, hit bad at the beginning. But I didn't know much about the other—.

Janiee [daughter]: The end, at the end of the war.

Interviewer: Do you remember hearing about the atomic bombs being dropped on Japan?

McJunkin: Yes uh-huh, that stopped it, yeah.

Interviewer: Was there celebration in Rome?

McJunkin: Oh yeah, it was.

Interviewer: What was it like, what was the celebration like?

McJunkin: It was really something to hear and see all of that, you know, on the news.

Interviewer: Were there reels, did you go to the movies and see film of the celebrations?

McJunkin: Yeah uh-huh yeah, we—but we would go see it on the movie too, they would show a lot of that.

Interviewer: And um, so can you tell me a little bit more. So your husband, where was he before he came back to Rome?

McJunkin: Before he came back to Rome?

Interviewer: Yeah.

McJunkin: The last time he was—I was trying to think. I wasn't far from Rome. That's when he came— got to the house, got home. I was home then because I was— then that's when he came back to the states. He was on his way over to the Pacific and I mean to the— yeah, the Pacific. So he got home and he was there for a week and he was to be shipped over there. But while he was there, that one ended, see. So we were in that celebration of that, that he didn't have to go. So, then he was back home after that. And it was so good because I had just gotten pregnant with my daughter.

Interviewer: So when was your daughter born?

McJunkin: She was born in Rome, there, right after the war.

Janie [daughter]: 1945.

McJunkin: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Did you and your husband have your own house at that time? Where were you living?

McJunkin: We were—I was living in an apartment, at another house with another, the lady that owned the house. I didn't have much room. And then I moved because I didn't have enough room there when I got—when I was going to have her. So I had her but then I moved because I didn't have enough room.

Interviewer: Was it hard to find a house or did you—how did you find the house you lived in in Rome?

McJunkin: Well, it was an upstairs apartment up there and it was right downtown, right off of town. So that's where I went too. But then we bought a house and moved when she was a year old into one.

Interviewer: What did your husband do after the war?

McJunkin: He worked at a hosiery mill. Then he went to a glove mill and he was a salesman.

Interviewer: And you became a homemaker?

McJunkin: Yeah, I stayed home. [laughs]

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your family. What was it like to raise your daughter—and then you had another daughter, right?

McJunkin: And then I had another daughter. So I never did work because I didn't have anybody to keep them. They didn't have places like they have now, you know, to leave children. So I didn't work so we just, we would plan our time to do things that didn't cost a whole lot. We got uh, where we moved to it was a lot of young children so they just—we just entertained the children, played things with them.

Interviewer: Did you have friendships with your neighbors? Were you close to other people?

McJunkin: Oh yeah, we were all, mm-hmm, close together. We were real—where we lived.

Interviewer: Did you go back to that same Baptist church in Rome?

McJunkin: Yeah, after I moved back into—yeah. But the preacher that had been there when I was growing up, he'd come to a church out in west Rome and that's where we had bought a house so that's where I went, we went.

Interviewer: As a young mother, what were your hopes and dreams for the future? What did you want for your family?

McJunkin: I wanted us to be, you know, a good family and do the things that we should do as a family. Go to church and see that they go to school and that they have friends and play. They were free to play in my yard anytime [laughs].

Interviewer: When did you decide to go back and get your GED?

McJunkin: Well after I got them up big enough that I didn't have to be home all day long, I could go, go back and take the classes I needed and get my diploma and that's what I did.

Interviewer: What, how did that make you feel? What did that mean to you, to get your GED?

McJunkin: Well I was so glad I could do it. That, you know I had to quit when my mom passed away and I didn't get to finish school so I wanted to do that.

Interviewer: Did you have any favorite subjects? Did you like literature or math or—?

McJunkin: Math wadn't one! [laughs]. One, my best one was literature—because I like to read—. And I liked history too but yeah. I did pretty good.

Interviewer: Did you and your husband live together in Rome for a long time, after then, even after your daughters grew up?

McJunkin: Oh yeah we all— but yeah. We moved up close to her because we had a big house and it was a lot of stairs and he had got where it was hard for him to do, and so we moved up there where we wouldn't have those stairs.

Interviewer: Is your husband still—still with us?

McJunkin: No, he passed away. Where we lived before there was a lot of children in that area. I would have a Halloween party on Halloween night in my big basement. I had all of them, my nieces and nephews, doing stuff. Kids just loved it when they come by the house. That went on for years. I see them now and they say, we just love that when you had the Halloween—its your house up there. Oh they just loved it because I had them telling fortunes, ghosts, and the pot with the stuff coming out like it was—so they just loved that. I said yeah, I enjoyed doing that too.

Interviewer: That's great. My husband and I are into Halloween—we do Halloween parties too. What was the house like? What do you remember about that house? It was a big house?

McJunkin: It had three levels. It was a beautiful—.

Interviewer: And it had a big yard too?

McJunkin: Yes, and a big yard too.

Interviewer: What are your daughter's names?

McJunkin: What now?

Interviewer: Your children. What are your children's names?

McJunkin: Oh, Janie, that was her [motions head to other side of room] Janie, Sue, and Nancy. Nancy was my youngest one that was killed in an accident.

Interviewer: I'm sorry about that. So, how did you—moving up to kind of more recently, how did you learn about the American Rosie the Riveter?

McJunkin: Through Jane.

Interviewer: Through Jane Tucker?

McJunkin: Yeah, she was my—you know, I go went to the dentist and she was the one who cleaned my teeth. And all those long years we had not talked about the war. I'd

went to her for years and she said something one time about it and I said yeah, I worked in an airplane factory too. Because she was telling me about—she said you did! She said you've got to join. She had just started Rosie the Riveters and I said yeah, I worked in an airplane factory too.

Interviewer: When did you decide to join?

McJunkin: Yeah, I joined it.

Interviewer: In 2010, like right after when she started?

McJunkin: Oh, uh, what year was it Janie? [speaks to daughter]

Janie [daughter]: Probably about two years later.

Interviewer: What do your experiences of World War Two, what do they mean to you? What does this time mean to you in your life? Was it a really important time in your life or just kind of a small time—.

McJunkin: Well I'm just glad I lived this long any—because I've had some sorrows but some of it has really been good, and interesting, and you learn a lot.

Interviewer: Do you have grandchildren?

McJunkin: What?

Interviewer: Do you have grandchildren?

McJunkin: Yes, I've got one little grand—.

Janie [daughter]: Grandchildren.

McJunkin: —I've got a grandson. The—had two grandsons but the younger one, he passed away. But the— I've got a great-grandson. He's got a grandson. He's in the FBI in Atlanta. You know, don't get to see him as much because he plays ball a lot. He's—he's either baseball or basketball and busy all the time.

Interviewer: Well that's still pretty exciting. So what do you think then, what do you think future generations, your great-grandson, what do you think everyone should know about what it was like to live and work during World War Two?

McJunkin: Well I don't know how—I think there would be a whole lot of difference now because see, you know, the kids now have these things I couldn't even [motions with hands] [laughs]—. That they have now, that they know everything. They know better. They can better from what they have now. It's more interested in—

where we did it, you know, the teacher taught it and we listened. But now they have all that stuff that they can just go to and get it.

Interviewer: Do you think though that there is anything special about hearing about it from people who lived through the—.

McJunkin: Yeah, I think uh, they have that a lot though. That people go and tell about it so that still goes on, you know.

Interviewer: Do you ever talk to kids about your experiences?

McJunkin: Yeah, I've told, you know, children sometimes. But they do have things, that they go to schools and tell them all this stuff. In our town, I don't know [laughs] its everywhere but they do there.

Interviewer: So, is there anything that I didn't ask you about that you wanted to tell me, that I missed?

McJunkin: No, I can't think of anything but I, you know, that we—it was a very—everybody was really nice to us and good. There were some ladies that, in California, that I just thought the world of because they were so nice and good to us.

Interviewer: That's good.

McJunkin: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's great. Well thank you, thank you so much, Mrs. McJunkin, for speaking with me today and being here and I am honored to have been able to listen to your story.

McJunkin: Thank you. Well, thank you.