

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Joy Mitchell interview

Conducted by James Newberry

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Transcribed by Kate Maginnis

Born in Rome, Georgia, in 1925, Joy Mitchell worked at the city's newly constructed Battey Hospital during World War II. Posted at the front desk, Mitchell wrote passes for family members and friends visiting soldiers who were recovering from injuries sustained in Europe and Asia. After the war Mitchell became a university librarian. She recorded her oral history interview at Kennesaw State University in August 2018.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: This is James Newberry and I'm here with Joy Mitchell on Wednesday, August 29, 2018 at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. And I want to thank you for sitting down with me.

Mitchell: Thank you for having me.

Interviewer: And I have to ask this: Do you agree to this interview?

Mitchell: I do.

Interviewer: Alright. Wonderful. Well Ms. Mitchell could you state your full name?

Mitchell: You really want my full name?

Interviewer: Your full name.

Mitchell: Edith Martha Joy Mitchell

Interviewer: Four names?

Mitchell: Three. Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. And what's your birthday?

Mitchell: March 29, 1925

Interviewer: So, where did you grow up?

Mitchell: Here in Rome.

Interviewer: Ok. What were your parents' names?

Mitchell: John and Berta Mitchell. John was my daddy and Berta was mother.

Interviewer: Tell me what your dad did for a living.

Mitchell: He worked out at the silk mill, Tubize, whatever you wanna call it for years and then he drove a bread truck all around North Georgia in North Alabama, over in there. Had stores he delivered bread to. Then he went from bread truck to novelty, selling novelties like candy and stuff like that to stores. Then he retired and bought a store and ran it.

Interviewer: Did he make a good living?

Mitchell: Yeah. We never missed a meal. We lived in fourth ward, which was a poor section of town. But we didn't know it that we were poor. My mother and daddy were very good at managing money. Mother worked some. We had a good life. They were Christians and we were saved when we were little. We grew up in church and it was very good background.

Interviewer: You mentioned your mother worked for a while. What did she do?

Mitchell: She worked at the pants factory in North Rome. She worked later at Battey Hospital out there as seamstress, for a while.

Interviewer: How many siblings did you have?

Mitchell: Had two sisters and 1 brother. All younger and all dead now. I'm the oldest.

Interviewer: And what kind of older sister were you?

Mitchell: Bossy. [laughs] So, they said. But I was always blamed for whatever happened because "You shoulda known better, you were older." I tried to boss 'em. Keep 'em in line.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your childhood home? Can you describe it?

Mitchell: I lived the first four years over on Park Avenue, which is Carter Avenue now, along the railroad track behind the stores over there. Then when I was 4 years old, we moved to West 11th, corner of Avenue B and West. We had a 2-story house with porches up and down, had 4 porches. So, when the water got out all we did was go upstairs. The others had to move out, people around but actually the levy it was good.

Interviewer: So, you mean the house was flooded?

Mitchell: Oh yeah. We had to move upstairs. Everybody had lumber and the saw—what do you call ‘em?

Interviewer: Sawhorse

Mitchell: Yeah, sawhorse, And we weren’t allowed to buy those. Those were put back. Everybody as it came up, we helped each other. We knew what planks went in what room. What sawhorses went and got ‘em up, moved up stairs.

Interviewer: How often did that happen?

Mitchell: One year it happened 3 times. Twice. Every year at least once because we lived a block from the river. It flooded there.

Interviewer: You mentioned your family took boarders?

Mitchell: No, I said boards.

Interviewer: Got it.

Mitchell: Wooden boards to throw across the sawhorses to put the furniture on.

Interviewer: I see. What sort of chores did you have?

Mitchell: What?

Interviewer: Chores. Things you had to help with around the house.

Mitchell: We had a cow. I learned to milk the cow. I learned to strain the milk. I learned to churn. I learned how to get the butter, make it. My dad taught me a lot of things

because he was gone. I learned how to not to stick my finger in the electric socket cause it would hurt. He said you don't do that. He taught me how to do little things around the house that he would normally have to do and I learned how to do it.

Interviewer: How did the Depression affect your family? Did you notice a difference?

Mitchell: Yeah, yeah, it was bad. We couldn't go to the store and get a drink. It was only a nickel. We didn't ha—never missed any meals. We always had plenty to eat. Because we had a garden and we had potatoes, corn, beans, and everything out of our garden that mother would can. We would eat 'em through the year. But as far as buying stuff from the store we didn't get to do that until we were way up. We didn't have a car until I was 16. Except for one year we moved in the country in 1930. He bought a Model T and we had that Model T. I've gone all the way from 2 horse wagon to Model T to Model A. I bought a Model A to drive back and forth to the hospital. On up to they're going into outer space now so I don't know what they're gonna do. If in the next 100 years if there's advances like we did now then I don't know where we'll be.

Interviewer: Well tell me what your memories are of President Roosevelt are at that time?

Mitchell: We liked him. I liked him. We were glad to have him get a third term. He was— He did a lot for the country. He did the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps], started that. He gave them PA [WPA-Works Progress Administration] workers a lot of work. I think he was a good President. Course he's got a lot of people that don't think that.

Interviewer: So, you remembered when he got that third term?

Mitchell: I do. We were out. We had bought a place in the country that I wanted, so bad to live, all my life to live in the country. We were out there cleaning the house in '45 when he died. I remember that. It was a sad time.

Interviewer: How did you hear that news?

Mitchell: We had a radio. We only had radios then. No TVs.

Interviewer: Tell me about your early education. How were you schooled?

Mitchell: I went to fourth ward school for the first 6 grades. The next 2 years I went to seventh and eighth up on the hill, the clock. Then we went to a boys high for my first year, my freshman year. My sophomore year we were meeting in the gym with this partition between us and they had built a girls school. Then they sent us girls way off from the boys. It shoulda been junior high and senior high like it is now. But it was boys school and girls school then. The girls didn't like it. The boys didn't like it either.

Interviewer: So, you would've rather gone to school together?

Mitchell: It would've been better for everybody to mingle and to have—. I don't think it's good to just have girls by themselves and boys by themselves.

Interviewer: So, what sort of a student were you?

Mitchell: A good one. Since I have to answer it, mostly A's. My daddy respected A's because he thought I could do it. And he took my report card and one time I made a C and he took me off the bicycle for a month. And that just broke my heart. I had found out from the teacher I was gonna make A's and then on Friday before, report cards came out every month then. I went home and told him and he said no. A month until I see the report card, that's what it's gonna be. He always kept his word so we couldn't get around him, which we shouldn't he been able to.

Interviewer: So, he was strict?

Mitchell: Yeah, I would say so. Was mad at him then, but glad that he was. We had a real good, enjoyable childhood.

Interviewer: When did you graduate high school? Do you remember the year?

Mitchell: 1942.

Interviewer: At that time what were your goals, your hopes for the future?

Mitchell: Well, I wanted to be a WAAF but mother wouldn't sign for me to go in. They used the women, not to shell and bombing all, but they ferried the planes to the boys. I wanted to fly the planes but mother said no.

Interviewer: Why do you think she said no?

Mitchell: It didn't have a good name, a good reputation at first when it started. I don't know why. Probably mother just didn't want me to go. Was fussy.

Interviewer: Why did you want to go?

Mitchell: Well I was ready to fight 'em and get 'em, help all I could. Our whole class wanted to join up soon as we graduated. A lot of our boys did. They got their mothers to sign and they went in the service. It was December '41, we all wanted to join up and fight.

Interviewer: So, the attack on Pearl Harbor came in the middle of your Senior year then?

Mitchell: Right.

Interviewer: Tell me what your memories are of that day.

Mitchell: They called us all in the gym and we heard his, FDR, voice on the radio. When he said we are now in war, at war with Germany and Japan. It was a sad time for the whole student body. But that was his speech. He talked to us. I don't know what all he said. But I remember that he gave a rousing speech to the whole nation and it was good.

Interviewer: You finished out the year and you were hoping to join the—

Mitchell: Yeah, but I couldn't so I did one year at Bob Jones and took a business course in Cleveland, Tennessee. And I worked my way through waiting tables at 25 cents an hour.

Interviewer: Why did you choose Bob Jones? How did that come about?

Mitchell: Because it was a Bible college and I wanted to go to a Bible college.

Interviewer: You said you did one year?

Mitchell: Yeah. One-year business course. Came back and worked 2 or 3 places for RCA truck lines, a place up in north Rome—the bedspread, back then they had—

Interviewer: Chenille?

Mitchell: Chenille bedspread! Thank you, my memory goes. I worked there in the office. Then I got the job out at Battey.

Interviewer: Let me ask you, why did you come back after one year? Was it a one-year program?

Mitchell: It was one-year business course and that's all the money I had. Had a little saved up and then got a scholarship and worked through because my parents couldn't help me.

Interviewer: When you came back after one year did you lived with them again?

Mitchell: Yeah, oh yeah.

Interviewer: You had several jobs at first.

Mitchell: Yeah, didn't last very long. You'd get a better job or go to another place. But I get— I wanted to go out there as soon as the hospital was built. I felt like I could do something out there for the boys.

Interviewer: Let's talk about that. You came back, it was about 1943, I'd guess, by now, if you'd completed a year at Bob Jones.

Mitchell: Yeah.

Interviewer: Talk to me about Battey Hospital. Was it older or had it been built for the war?

Mitchell: It was just built for the boys. It was new. We— I have a little booklet that they gave the boys and gave everybody the employees that had a layout and all, and what they offered out there. I don't know if you have it in your museum or not. Would be nice to have. We were treated. Every morning we'd get the paper from the Colonel's office. It was where they were discharged, where the boys were brought in. We were treated like that. When I got discharged, I was discharged just like a soldier out of the workforce.

Interviewer: Well let's go from the very beginning. How did you hear about Battey Hospital in the first place?

Mitchell: We all knew it was being built because it was such a big thing and I applied and got the job. It was writing passes for everybody that came into

the hospital. No matter who they were they had to get a pass from me or the person that— it was 24-hour job at desk. Sometimes I'd pull 16 hours if the girl didn't come in on the night shift. My shift was 3-11 and I loved it because I'm geared that way. I stay up all night about 4:30 or 5 I go to bed.

Interviewer: Did you have to interview for the position?

Mitchell: Yes, I did

Interviewer: And who did you interview with?

Mitchell: I don't remember. It was some Lieutenant that interviewed me, and names slip me. I forget my own sometimes. [laughs]

Interviewer: Did you have to wear a uniform?

Mitchell: No, no.

Interviewer: What would you wear to work?

Mitchell: You dressed nicely. Back then everybody dressed if you went out in public. If you were goin somewhere on an airplane you wore gloves and a hat. If you went to church you wore gloves, hats, heels. I didn't work in heels, but I did work in a nice dress. You had to look nice for the people cause everyone came in saw me first and that was their first impression of the hospital. That's just like the person that answers the phone should be very knowledgeable in the business now instead of just sayin, "I don't know" or I—that records you get just drive me crazy.

Interviewer: So, sort of like front-line staff?

Mitchell: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you describe the building? How large was it and—?

Mitchell: Well the bus went by my house and picked me up. I mean that was the route. And it went all the way out the hospital and turned around in the hospital grounds. The hospital had gate 1 and gate 2 and it turned around at gate 2 and they had to walk about a block up to the administration building, which was still standing. And the flagpole's still out in front of it but of course the flag's not flying. They're not

using it. That's a big deal with me that they're just letting it sit out there and waste. Oughta be used for something. It was made well and kept well and I don't know how it looks now but I can get very political about that. [laughs]

Interviewer: Now were you in the administration building?

Mitchell: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, I'm assuming you sat behind a counter.

Mitchell: (18:44) They all walks up. And my desk was here [motions to her right] and I had a little anteroom here for visitors to wait if they came early. The visiting hours were 2-4 and 6-8. All the people who came in, came to my desk. They were told that at the gate, what they had to do. So they came to me and we already had the—what I get from Susan [someone speaks in the background indecipherable]—the passes. Had those already stamped, made out. All we had to do was put their name on it and the number where they were going like 24C or 21A. I just stamped it and handed it to them. So, it wasn't a very long process.

Interviewer: Was there security of some kind?

Mitchell: Yeah. You had to come through gate 1 or 2 and MPs were there. In fact, I saw one guy up there, MP on gate 2, and got introduced to him by the bus driver. We dated for a couple of years. It was—the MPs had a place to live. They had their own dining hall. We had a place for the nurses to live. The patients had their own dining hall, they had a library. It was very good, very nice. It had, we had prisoners of war from Germany, and they kept the grounds. Some of them were awful good looking men. You could see 'em working out there. The MPs were guarding them.

Interviewer: Where were the prisoners of war imprisoned? Jailed?

Mitchell: Well, around, you go up to the administration building and you go around to the back. And all the buildings were housed back in there, back in there, around the— Do you know how the hospital's layout at all?

Interviewer: Please describe it.

Mitchell: You go down a main corridor and corridors would go off to the left and right so that all the rooms had windows. And then you down some more and some more

would be go off to the right and left. Then go you some more and then you go down to the room and then you go to —We had a phone system where you plug it in and I went down there and messed around sometime with it. Slipped off, it was fun to get ‘em, plug it in. We would all, after the visitors left, gate 1, 2 the guys that took e’m in. The guys that looked after ‘em. My office would all plug in and we would all, till 11 o’clock. If Colonel came get one, told us, we all hung up and got busy.

Interviewer: So that was a time when maybe visitors weren’t coming in?

Mitchell: After 8 o’clock. We just didn’t, well I did nothing except the boys would come up and talk to me and that was awful. To listen to their things from the European theater. And then they got off of their train all the way from Charleston. We had the railroad coming to the hospital. And then they started coming from the Pacific and it was all the difference in the world in the guys coming from there. I don’t know if you know what Section 8 is, but there were people there that, who came back. And you were sorta messed up. You had what we called walking wounded. They were allowed to go out some. But then there was some that was behind bars that couldn’t go out. It was so messed up. If they fought different, you fight in mud in Europe, you fight in the jungle over through the Philippines and all over there. It was frightening to listen to what they went through. And they wanted to tell me but they couldn’t tell their family, but they could tell me. Almost had a nervous breakdown after listening to so many of ‘em cause so heartbreaking [voice cracks with emotion]

Interviewer: So, you did then have a lot of interactions with these soldiers?

Mitchell: Well yeah I dated some of them too.

Interviewer: While they were in the hospital?

Mitchell: [laughs] No. I dated a guy that had his arm out like this [arm straight out, stiff], his whole arm was in a cast. We went out and he said, “you not ashamed to go out with me?” “You got that for me. I’m not, I’m proud of it.” I was proud. There’s a lot of patriotism in World War II that you don’t have now. We were glad to do without, glad to give things, glad to things that were rationed. We griped a little but we were glad that we were helping the war effort. I still have a ration book that I didn’t use all of it. Shoes were rationed. Course you couldn’t get tires for your car. Cars were not made. If you’ll check there were no ‘45s and ‘46 cars made at all unless they went back. I know there was no ‘46. We had—no ‘45s

made. They started making 'em later but—everything. We scrapped metal, we'd find a nail, we'd save it. Take it to wherever, as kids.

Interviewer: Let me ask you: Could you give me an approximate number of how many soldiers were at the hospital at any given time?

Mitchell: [shakes head no] No I can't.

Interviewer: Was it hundreds?

Mitchell: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. And I'm assuming from what you said it was the full range of injuries.

Mitchell: Yes.

Interviewer: For the hospital staff, was it mostly military personnel or civilian?

Mitchell: The nurses were the WACs. You know, we had a head nurse who was—she was a head nurse. [laughter] We had Colonel Faust who was head of all of it. And he'd come sometimes to check at night. Course Gate 1 he had to go through there. Gate 1 or Gate 2 and alert everybody, and we were all ready for him. He left us alone pretty well, but he ran a strict hospital. It was very well kept, clean. The boys got service, not like now. They needed it, they got it then. They got off the train, came from San Francisco or wherever they landed over there, and then got onto the train and rode into our place. That's how far they had to come cause the other hospitals were full. That's how this one was built.

Interviewer: You were getting soldiers who were from all over the United States.

Mitchell: Right. Right. Right.

Interviewer: Okay, Do you remember local soldiers, local boys who ended up there?

Mitchell: No, I don't. I'm sorry.

Interviewer: No, that's no problem! How did they react to coming to Rome, Georgia? Did that strike them in any way? That they were ended up in Georgia when they might have been from New York or—.

Mitchell: Well they ‘rived. Course they wanted to go to a place close to home where their family could come to see ‘em. That’s, you know, ok. They had a right to gripe. But they needed to be sent here to get the care that they needed. And they got it.

Interviewer: What kind of quarters did they have? Individual rooms? Large rooms? How was it structured?

Mitchell: It went off into the quarters and it had rooms all out what we call wings. And they were in sometimes two to a room, I think. But most of ‘em were just one to a room. They had people working there. Most of the ones that worked directly with the boys still were military. No, I don’t remember any civilians working directly with the patients.

Interviewer: What kind of visitors were coming?

Mitchell: Their pare—family. I’ll tell you one that broke my heart was a lil ol’ lady from Alabama. Very small, got there early morning. I had day shift that day. She’d come from, ridden the bus all night, she’d had to sell the cow to get the money to buy the ticket to come to see her boy. She wanted to see her boy and visiting hours didn’t start until two o’clock. I didn’t know what to do and I said, “Well come on in here and have a seat.” And I set her up in there and I called the Lieutenant down there where she, where her son was, and I told her that, bout the mother bein in there, she was gonna have to come back that night. The Lieutenant said “I’ll tell you what. I’ll tell ‘em to start the hall and you can start her down the hall. And I won’t know he’s gone and you won’t know she’s gone.” And I said, “Works for me!” So, I started her down and he had run off all the way and he picked her up and went round and around and around. I stand there crying watchin ‘em and I said, “Come on in here.” They spent the day there in the room next to me and she had to go back that night. I said, “Go home with me.” She said, “No I gotta go back tonight.” So, she caught the bus and went back. But families came in and then friends. Some of the boys started dating girls, the walking wounded would. And some of ‘em that couldn’t get out of bed, the girls would come to see ‘em. It was a good flow of people every time.

Interviewer: Did they, did most of the soldiers return to service after they had healed? Or did most go on home, depending on their injuries?

Mitchell: When I got the thing every morning, I looked at it, whether they were discharged, they were going back home. They weren’t put back in service. They were too—

they was wounded too bad and they done their thing. It wasn't like Iraq-you go and come back, you go and come back.

Interviewer: You mentioned working from 3pm to 11pm.

Mitchell: Right.

Interviewer: How much money did you make? Do you remember?

Mitchell: She asked me that the other day and I don't remember. But it was better than pay outside. I think it was around \$2,000/year, which doesn't seem very much, but it was good money then.

Interviewer: I think that was significant at the time.

Mitchell: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were you mostly putting that money away or spending it?

Mitchell: Well I was spending it because we bought a house. My sister and I put all of our money into it to buy the house. When we bought the place out in the country. It wasn't all that much. You didn't draw all that much remember. That's just what you made. But we, I was buying more bonds. It was good. I bought this Model A from the guy that was almost brand new. I drove that thing from morning to night. I had a C ration card which gave me all the gas I needed because I worked at the hospital and back and forth and I lived out. So, I rode—I went to Chattanooga, I went to Atlanta in it. Which I guess really, I shouldn't but I made one trip each way. I had to go. I was collecting books and I had to go to some of the secondhand bookstores down there just to see what they had. That's where I spent my money instead of buying an ice cream or Dr. Pepper, I'd buy used books. And started buying 'em and still buying 'em.

Interviewer: Did you have any breaks during the day?

Mitchell: Yeah, if I wanted it. Yeah, you could take a break.

Interviewer: Can you tell me something about your coworkers? Was it mostly men? Mostly women?

Mitchell: I took a Sergeant's place and he left. There was a Corporal still working there, he left pretty soon. After I got there, they hired somebody else. There were 3 girls working each shift. And then we had one that rotated so we could get a day off. Sometimes the night girls didn't come in so the 3 -11 girl had to do a double. Which was alright, you know? I didn't mind doing that.

Interviewer: Were there any African American people who worked there?

Mitchell: I don't remember any at all.

Interviewer: What about soldiers? Any black soldiers?

Mitchell: Well I didn't come in contact with soldiers per se. The MPs I don't think there was any black MPs. No patients that were, I didn't—there could've been, but I didn't come in contact with 'em.

Interviewer: I wanted to talk a little bit about the—Well it looks like you've answered most of these questions. So, I wanna move on to the entertainment. What sort of entertainment was there for the soldiers?

Mitchell: Big bands came to play for 'em. They didn't come through me cause entertainment took care of that. The bigger entertainments—the guy Phillip Morris cigarettes. Back then he was saying [sings] “Call for Phillip Morris.” And he was dragging it out and that was the way they advertised the cigarettes then. He was just a little guy. He visited. He came through my desk. And I wrote him a pass. Henry Ford came. He had to get a pass I said, “you gotta get a pass like everybody else.” And I said I'd rather you, I'll give you a pass if you put your name on this check right here. If you write on your check. Checkbook.” He said, “No can't do that.” I said, “What're you gonna do with all your money?” He said “I'm gonna give it to Ms. Berry.” And I said “Yeah Martha Berry needs it. She needs it so I'll let you go. I'll give you a pass.” But we talked and then the—. I left this to the last—Helen Keller came through with her second companion, Miss Thompson. And next to being saved, that was the greatest joy of my life was talking to her and seeing what she did. She would talk to me like this [Motions with fingers to indicate the ASL manual alphabet] course I didn't know what she'd said. She'd tell her teacher. Teacher'd tell me. But she could also talk some. Not much inflection in her voice at the time. But I experienced it. I saw it. I held her hand. She did me but I still don't know how that lady ever learned to talk! I don't know! She would, she'd put her thumb here [on throat] and one finger, I don't know which one, on my mouth, and on my nose. And I would mouth my

words slowly and enunciate 'em good. She could read that and she'd answer me. That woman got degrees. She got her Masters. She learned 4 or 5 different languages in Braille. She spoke all over the world to everybody. She was a wonder. I just don't know how. It—the Lord had to have helped her. She couldn't have done it by herself. Miss Anne Sullivan was her first teacher. But on Facebook, if you wanna go, this Miss Thompson tells about this and it shows Helen Keller doin that like she did to me. Shows how she would talk to other people.

Interviewer: Did you know she was gonna come before she showed up? Were there preparations? How did that come about?

Mitchell: I don't remember. There was so many people that went in and out every day. Hundreds went through till—We did well to get the passes in. But it was just those were memorable now and at the time there were others that came through that were just as memorable, but she was the best.

Interviewer: Do you remember how long she stayed at the hospital there visiting?

Mitchell: She went to the wards and stayed for hours. And she, they played a piano, they had a wooden stage. She got up there and stood right by the piano and put her hands on the piano and got the vibration. And [makes conducting motions] to the music. She could keep up with the beat. Not singing it, but the beat. It was amazing. Just how she could adapt herself to her handicap. Of course, she was a great blessing to the boys who went down there to show them what they could do if they set their mind to it. It helped a lot of the boys. The boys told me that seeing her amazed them and also gave them hope that someday they could do things that they couldn't do then. Course we all tried to encourage 'em.

Interviewer: With someone like Henry Ford—Was that someone you knew well before he came?

Mitchell: No, I didn't. I knew of him. I knew his cars. I was driving one of them! But I don't really know what he came for.

Interviewer: That's why I'm asking. Why would he have come?

Mitchell: Well, to show that if you can make money, you can get to be a millionaire. I guess, was the only thing [laughs] I, but, was just a talk they thought they could

help them with encouraging. He didn't give 'em anything. He could've given 'em something but he didn't.

Interviewer: A \$100 check?

Mitchell: Yeah. [laughs] Wouldn't have hurt him but that would've helped more than what he had to say.

Interviewer: Were there other shows? You mentioned a big band.

Mitchell: Yeah.

Interviewer: Where are these shows?

Mitchell: They had a big auditorium. Now after you went through all the wards, we called the wards. You had a big rest area, a library, where they just go and get snacks. And then they had a stage. They had the acts and the Big Bands on the stage. I had nothing to do with their comin and goin. It was was through entertainment. Some second lieutenant who—second lieutenants thought they knew it all. When they got to be first lieutenants, they realized they didn't know it all. We were always there when they got to be first lieutenants. They were easier to work with.

Interviewer: Did the soldiers who were convalescing—Did they ever stay long enough to work, have a job on the site at the hospital?

Mitchell: That I don't know. I wasn't privy to any of that. I do tell you, on Redmond Road out there where the houses are built, they're like the small, had 4 rooms. It was built for the non-coms so that their families could come live with them if they wanted to live off base. That whole Redmond Road if you go down on each side and added to and fixed up and there are some of 'em that need fixin. Some of 'em were torn down. But the whole Redmond Road, it ran into gate 1 and that was for the non-coms families who worked there, to live there.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what non-coms mean?

Mitchell: Oh. Non-commission. The guys that did all the work. The ones that ran the Army. The Sergeants. First Sergeant and all that—.

Interviewer: So, the hospital was very much a military operation?

Mitchell: Oh yeah. It was. It had the Colonel on top and he ran it with his people. He had offices and military. First Lieutenant, Second Lieutenant, Captain's worked on 'em. He had a Warrant officer, Warrant officer who did a lot of the work back then. He was next to the Colonel. He was between the Sergeant and the Colonel back then. I don't know if you're familiar with the way they worked. They did the work, he got the, he gave the orders. Colonel Faust did.

Interviewer: With these guys you dated, how did that come about?

Mitchell: Oh they'd come up to the desk after 8 o'clock, after their family or their visitors left. And talk, socialize. Then sit there and talk or stand there they'd talk or sit. We had from 8 to 11 to talk and they were, the guys that were, the guy that was head of them had office right across from me. And he'd let them come up and you got to know them. I got to know some of them that I wanted to date and some of 'em I didn't. I mean—.

Interviewer: It wasn't a situation where you felt compelled to date them because—.

Mitchell: No. Oh no. no.

Interviewer: So, you were interested in dating?

Mitchell: Well that's all there was. All the others were gone. There was nobody else outside of the hospital to date. I mean all of 'em were gone. Army had 'em.

Interviewer: I want to return to the topic of POWs too. Cause that is something we have not previously talked about. You mentioned they were actually, they lived on the site

Mitchell: Yeah.

Interviewer: You also mentioned they were doing work outside?

Mitchell: They did the outside, they kept the grounds, flowers, they raked, they cut the grass. They did all the groundwork and they had MPs guardin 'em.

Interviewer: Did you ever interact with them?

Mitchell: No. We weren't allowed to do that.

Interviewer: What sort of outfits or uniforms were they in?

Mitchell: Regular clothes. Like you'd wear.

Interviewer: The POWs?

Mitchell: Yeah.

Interviewer: What were their barracks like?

Mitchell: They would have a P on 'em so that you'd know they were Prisoners of War. But I never did see their barracks. And I wasn't interested enough to go round and have a look at 'em. But I assume they were like the WACs and the military police had theirs. They were all separate.

Interviewer: Was it behind a fence?

Mitchell: Yeah, there was fence all the way around the hospital grounds.

Interviewer: The Prisoner of War area, did that have a special name or was it part of the Battey Hospital campus? Was it a base or a fort or was it part of the campus of the hospital?

Mitchell: It was just a building that they lived in. In this outline of the map of the hospital the wards go out like this. [motions out with hands] Then it gets to be the V, the big section. The big rest area, auditorium, and eating, dining hall, different dining halls. Then on out there they had the guardhouse where they got the, where they got put if they were caught drinking in town or something, MPs. That were just for the working ones. Then they had the Provost Marshall. Then you had a building for the ladies, and a building for the prisoners. You know, on the back side of the hospital itself, but right at the hospital. I mean it was no, nothing around it.

Interviewer: Did you eat supper in the cafeteria, or did you bring your own supper?

Mitchell: Brought it. We weren't allowed to eat in the cafeteria.

Interviewer: Okay. I want to move towards the end of the war. How long did you work at the hospital?

Mitchell: I was discharged in '45. That was about when we closed. I was discharged just before they closed it.

Interviewer: Okay, did you have a sense that the war was coming towards an end?

Mitchell: Well yeah. When they dropped that first bomb, I thought that was—. But I didn't know they were gonna drop the second one but them to learn their lesson but took the second one for em to do it. That was the same for the civilians to have to do it. We were sorry for that. Lot of civilians got killed. Lot of Jews in the European theater was horrendous. But we weren't aware of that many Jews being killed. We were, it's like you do now where you have TV to show you every shot that's fired just about it. We only had radio and the radio people only knew what they were heard. Government didn't tell 'em much. We weren't aware of a lot of things till after the war was over.

Interviewer: Were you discharged before or after the atomic bombs were dropped?

Mitchell: I don't remember.

Interviewer: How did you feel being discharged?

Mitchell: I thought it was fine. It was time for me to go. I had done my service. And the boys came home, and they needed their job. It was fine.

Interviewer: How long, or about how long, did the hospital remain open after you left?

Mitchell: Not very long because it closed in '45 if I remember correctly. The later part of '45.

Interviewer: How did you learn that you were discharged?

Mitchell: You get a sheet of paper with the discharges on it and your name's there. And you get your discharge papers. You gone. You just pick up your check and go.

Interviewer: What were your plans after that?

Mitchell: I still wanted to go to a bible college. But I went back to work and worked till I was 29 years old. Which would've been—I went back to school in '51. 1951. January of '51. Went to Tennessee Temple Bible College in Chattanooga and graduated from there.

Interviewer: What sort of work did you do up until that time?

Mitchell: I worked at National City Bank which is no longer here. I worked for while I was there. 4 years. Working—I balanced the whole banks day and gave all the tellers their totals and what they were supposed to—I ran every check through my machine. Sometimes, one time it was 10,000 checks that I ran through. That was one that helped me, worked my way through a bank in Chattanooga for that. And then I worked, I went my master's at Vanderbilt, and I worked at a bank in Nashville. It was very good that for me to do because it was hours that just I went in and worked till we got the day's work done. It was, could be eight o'clock. Could be ten depending on the deposits that day.

Interviewer: You mentioned during, while you were working at the hospital, that you had bought a house?

Mitchell: Family did.

Interviewer: And that's when you had moved to the country.

Mitchell: Right.

Interviewer: I know you were working at the bank after the war and I want to ask about Kelly? Who's Kelly?

Mitchell: Kelly was a guy that I saw, MP guardin gate 2 out there. I told the bus driver we were sitting there waitin for him to leave cause he turned around. I said I want to meet guy. He said I'll call ya. So, he introduced me to the guy. Kelly got on the bus, we talked, and he was on 3-11 shift too. Every night we'd talk until the bus had to go and then we'd start dating. We dated of a morning. It was kind of crazy. Everything was different during the war. You did what you had to do when you had to do it. We went out to the mill where, at Berry College. That's a good place a date. The Old Mill. You ever been out there?

Interviewer: I've been to the campus. I'm not sure I've been to the—.

Mitchell: Oughta go to that Old Mill because it's big and it's not operating now. But it, I thinkit's the biggest one in the world. There was one in Germany that was larger but it's not anymore in Germany.

Interviewer: And how long did you date him?

Mitchell: Till he was sent out to Columbus, Georgia with the paratroopers. Then he was sent somewhere else and we set a date for marriage and Sam put him behind the closed doors so to speak, where he couldn't get out, and shipped him to France. We dated, letters, as you can do a lot of dating through letters, but it gets old after while. He came back. Came to the house, course it wasn't like it was when we first dated 5 years before that. So, it sort of dwindled out.

Interviewer: Where was he from?

Mitchell: Mississippi. Jackson, Mississippi

Interviewer: How do you feel about that in retrospect?

Mitchell: About him? I feel like he told me the day I got the letter that I was going to college that he wouldn't write anymore, it was over. Because he didn't wanna be regimented to hours. Like I would have to be in class and go. His life had been regimented long enough and I can understand that cause 5 years in the Army's a long time. I didn't hear from him after that until 2 years later we both sent each other a Christmas card in the mail and it crossed. That's all I heard but years later I called him. I was going to Houston to see my brother and I called him. He had married late and his wife answered the phone. I told her who it was and it was very nice. We had a nice talk. Then I called him again later, he was older than I, but it just kinda dwindled away. You know.

Interviewer: What was his full name?

Mitchell: Well he didn't ever want anybody to know his full name. So I don't think I oughta say. He hated it and he wouldn't tell me for a long time. Everybody called him Kelly so we'll just leave it at that.

Interviewer: You talked about going back to school in 1951.

Mitchell: Right.

Interviewer: So, let's pick up there. Tell me about your education

Mitchell: I got my B.A. from them in 3 ½ years.

Interviewer: From Tennessee Temple?

Mitchell: From Tennessee Temple. I was, I went down to Emory in Atlanta and spent one summer taking library courses. And went back and started being their librarian there.

Interviewer: At Tennessee Temple?

Mitchell: At Temple. Then I went, go back and forth, to Nashville. two or three days, take classes, and come back. Very tiring, very, during that time built a two story library.

Interviewer: And where was this?

Mitchell: Here, in Temple. While I was in Nashville. I'd come down on weekends and argue with the architect. We would argue over the blueprints and everything.

Interviewer: I want to clarify, so where was Tennessee Temple?

Mitchell: Chattanooga.

Interviewer: Ok, and then what were you going up to Nashville for?

Mitchell: For my master's degree in Library Science. You could only get a degree in library science in masters. Now you can get some kind of degree with UBA. But there were only three colleges that offered a PhD in library science at the time and that was in San Francisco, Chicago, and New York. So, you know, I had a lot of hours after my Master's, but I just got those at UT and took what I wanted, University of Tennessee at night, University of Chattanooga at night. I got my master's plus 45 hours. And I took, I had a lot of Special Ed and a lot of it is what I wanted to take, like interior decorating and art. I enjoyed those.

Interviewer: Would you say that you were just somebody that enjoyed studying?

Mitchell: Yeah, I was a student. I still read a book about every two days. I don't remember 'em, what I read a week or two ago. But I've always been a reader and a student. I'm still interested in things, but I don't read anymore for knowledge. I figure those days are over. I'll just do my fiction.

Interviewer: So, you were based at Chattanooga?

Mitchell: For 10 years I was their librarian there in Chattanooga. And then—.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Mitchell: Then I was a librarian at a junior there, junior school, and they had all boys working for me in the library. They were good. I enjoyed them. They didn't want any girls comin in that library workin. They said we'll clean it, we'll keep it. "We don't want any girls comin in." So, we didn't have any boy coming in for junior high, it was great. Then somebody gave my name to the University of Virginia and they wrote and asked me if I'd do a summer class for teachers up there in Virginia. I did it in 2 different towns Wise, Virginia and another one teaching audio visual Back then it was 16milimeter and the film strip and the things like that. The teachers, once teacher who had to take it didn't even have electricity at their school. It was ridiculous. Then I got my master's from there and while I was at the University of Virginia I had worked at the public library while I was getting my master's in Nashville. The lady who was business librarian decided that I needed to come to Nashville. She got me to, an audience to meet the county supervisor and city supervisor. One of them was on his way to play golf and I thought "well just forget that, he's got his mind on golf." The other one promised me everything by page. And I knew he couldn't do that. So, I just dismissed it, went back to Virginia. Got this call one-night sayin, "You got the job. You be here at so-and-so." I said, "My job's not over here until such and such a date. I can't do it." He said, "Well you got to." I said "Sorry you'll have to get somebody else. I'd love to have the job, but this is—I gotta stay here for another week." He said, "Well I'll see what I can do." Called me back and said, "They'll let you come a week late to our school." Was just schoolteachers you had. So, I went in and everybody was mad at me because I didn't have to do the in-service. I went into a very hostile thing my first year of teaching up there at a high school. But I stayed 22 years out there and it was great.

Interviewer: That was Franklin?

Mitchell: Franklin High School. Loved it. Loved my work. Built a library out there. I say built it. I drew it up and worked with architect making it. Had some of music kids there. It was a really, I had some friends there. My secretary, I just heard from her this last week. We still stay in touch. Ended it in 1988 I retired. I was 63 years old and I decided I didn't want to do my other 2 years to get a little more money, so I retired. They said, "You can't do that." I said, "Watch me and see."

I figured out the difference in what I would make if I was workin for 'em was \$4 - \$500 a month. I said I'm an idiot. I'm not gonna do that. Do without a meal or two. So, I quit. 63 and I never missed a meal. Never went back.

Interviewer: When did you return to Rome?

Mitchell: 2011. My sister got Alzheimer's and she was callin for me. I just came down here and I just didn't realize how bad it was. I just called a mover and told 'em pack my stuff and move me down here. They did. It cost me \$10,000 for it, to move it down here, cause I had a lot of, Susan calls it junk. But I call it collections. I had a collection of this, that, and the other. Had a lot of books.

Interviewer: What did it feel like to come back to your hometown?

Mitchell: I'm lost. It's a change. Susan's a real slick person and knows the ins and outs of the road and everywhere we go, we go a different way. I can never find my way back, but Rome's changed a lot. It's still a small town. Nashville is a big little town if you know what I mean. It's still has that small flavor in it that I like. I love Nashville but had to leave my friends. I haven't made friends down here because I don't wanna have to say goodbye to 'em. They all would be my age or close to it and I just don't go out for it. I stay in my room and I like TCM, Turner Classic Movies. I read, and I listen to my music. I only go out to get my hair fixed, once and a while to eat out and that's it. And I'm happy. The Lord's been so good to me all my life, 93 years. I'm just so thankful to him to have given me all the blessings that he did. I been to Europe. Got to go to Europe twice. Stayed 5 ½ months out on the road in a motor home with Fred. Things you wouldn't think someone from Corner of Avenue B and West 11th would ever get to do. I'll put it that way. It was just so far beyond. I always wanted to be a librarian, but I didn't think it was available. I didn't think that I could, and the Lord made it possible.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the reasons you were willing to share your story with me today?

Mitchell: Well I want the next generation, and the next generation, and the next generation to know what we went through a little bit, and that's very little bit, World War II, that they're not going through now. They don't call it war now; they call it something else. They just send 'em over and our boys get killed. It's not a war. They don't call it a war. I don't know. I am content to do what I'm doing. I interact with the girls at work with me, who've worked for me. I was at Brookdale for 4 years and I had, made friends there. But when I moved over here to

Riverwood Remembrance, I say over here, Riverwood Remembrance Village. I made up my mind. I wasn't going to go out and make friends anymore. So I don't go to the activities or anything because most of 'em are far gone. It breaks your heart to try to talk to some of 'em. I don't want that. I've had enough of it, I think.

Interviewer: Do you consider yourself a Rosie?

Mitchell: [chuckles] I never did till Jane came and told me I was. Jane's very forceful, in fact she thinks I am. She says anyone that took the place of a boy to go [indecipherable], to go, is a Rosie. I never had a riveter in my hand, a rivet thing. I guess if you look at it that way, I am a Rosie and proud to be one.

Interviewer: I want to thank you for sharing your experiences.

Mitchell: Well I hope a little bit of it is help but doesn't seem likely it'll be much. But if you can use it that's fine.

Interviewer: We will go ahead and conclude there.

Mitchell: Okay. Thank you very much.

Interviewer: Thank you.