

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Elizabeth (Liz) Campbell interview

Conducted by Adina Langer

July 1, 2021

Transcribed by Natalie Dufour

Born on October 13, 1931, in northwest Fulton County, Georgia, Elizabeth (Liz) Alsobrook Campbell grew up in a rural area that has since been incorporated into the city of Atlanta. She married her husband, Ray Walton Campbell, who was known to friends and family as “Walt,” in 1957, and the couple settled in Smyrna. Having worked at Sears during World War II to support his family, Walt enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1946 and served through 1948 in Norfolk, VA, and then aboard the destroyer USS Waldron in Algiers, LA. As a veteran, Walt was active in the American Legion for more than 70 years. He passed away on May 6, 2021.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: Ok fabulous. So my name is Adina Langer and I’m the curator of the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University. Today is July 1, 2021, and I’m here at the Museum of History and Holocaust Education with Liz Campbell for a Legacy Series interview during which we will remember her husband, Raye Walton Campbell, who served in the US Navy right after World War II. So first, do you agree to this interview?

Campbell: Yes

Interviewer: Wonderful, and can you please state your full name?

Campbell: My full name is Elizabeth Alsobrook Campbell, and everyone calls me Liz

Interviewer: Wonderful, so we’re going to spend some time in the interview remembering your husband's life, but I’d like to start with your background. Can you please tell me when and where you were born?

Campbell (00.52): I was born October the 13th, 1931, in Fulton County, which is now where I was born is in the city of Atlanta now, it was Fulton County, and then, shortly after that, we moved further down in the country, but still in Fulton County. I was raised all my life in the same area, northwest Atlanta. I went to James L Mayson Grammar School¹, which was named after my great- great-grandfather because he gave the property there. I had one sister, Virginia, and we grew up in [shrugs] moderate means. My dad was a steamfitter, and he did construction work. We came along during the depression and so we had many hard years. And sometimes we were happy just for daddy to catch a rabbit so we could have some meat [laughs]. But anyway, we had a very good life. We went to the Methodist Church, which was also Mayson

¹ No further information can be found about the school.

Methodist Church²; again, my great-great grandfather had given the property there. And this was at the corner of Bankhead Highway, at that time, and Bolton Road which now has another name. And then I went to West Fulton High School³, which was up close to where I was actually born. And, I only went to high school [shrugs slightly]. Anyway, those days everyone just went right out and went to work right afterwards [chuckles] so that's what I did. And then, I just had a normal life. And I didn't meet my husband, Walt, until about 1955.

Interviewer: Great, so before we get into that a little bit, can we just go back and tell me your parents' names?

Campbell (2.39): Oh ok, my mother's name was Elizabeth Mayson Maynard, and my father's name was Harry Parks Alsobrook. They also had been born and raised in the same area where we grew up. All of our family lived there.

Interviewer: And you said your father was a steamfitter. Can you tell me a little bit about what that was like?

Campbell (3.01): A steamfitter is much like a plumber in a way, but a lot of people didn't know what steamfitters are. Well back in those days, a lot of the really fancy houses in Atlanta and on West Paces Ferry Road, they had steam boilers for heat, just like, you know, a steam- steam- a radiator, and they had that. And he did that. He and another man had a little company together but then when the Depression came along he lost that- they lost that. So after that he just worked. He was a member of the local union. He was a union member, and he did construction work. And a lot of times later on he worked on power plants because most power plants ran on steam. So he would be gone for periods of time, and my mother, my sister and I would be home alone. We did live in kind of a rural area. Had to walk a mile everyday- this is like the old folks- I had to walk a mile every day to grammar school and then when I got to high school, I had to still walk that mile and catch a Georgia Power Company⁴ bus because back in those days we didn't have school buses. And everybody was on their own. And so- and then in 1948, my mother passed away and I was 16 years old. My sister was still at-

² A branch of the Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church, before the Civil War, this church was known for its racial diversity. James L. Mayson, who donated the property, was a local plantation holder. In 1960, the church's membership was declining, and it closed in 1963. <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2283187/mayson-methodist-church-cemetery>

³ Before 1952, West Fulton High School was an independent school in the district. However, the school board then combined all four high schools in the area to form a single school with different campuses and specialities. In 2016, this model was abandoned, and West Fulton High School was moved to South Fulton High School. <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/domain/10816>

⁴ This company is still in existence today. During Liz's childhood it was located on Peachtree street, but in 1981, it moved to its current location. It is the largest operating company in Southern Power. <https://www.georgiapower.com/content/dam/georgia-power/pdfs/company-pdfs/about-us/gpc-history.pdf>

Interviewer: Did your mother take care- was her- did she stay home with you?

Campbell: My mother was just a housewife. Not just a housewife, but a housewife. She stayed home with us, and we had a very good childhood. We did simple little things like go to the church to an ice cream social. And then in the summertime, we used to meet at our church and go on picnics about once a month. And when I was a teenager, we had what you would call a teenage canteen, we had a park there and we played ball. I played on the softball team. And that was pretty much it. [laughs]

Interviewer: And, were you close with your sister?

Campbell: Well, there was five and a half years difference with us, so therefore we were not that close in doing things and we fought like many sisters do. And, in later years we got along a lot better. But her being five and a half years older than I was, naturally she was working and I was still in school, and I would wear her clothes- her good clothes, and she didn't like that. So we had our ups and downs. [smiles] But uh, and then my sister got married in 1948, December of 1948 so I was at home alone with my dad. And I kind of just kept house for him. We both learned how to cook early in our life because our mother was sick a lot, she had chronic asthma. She was sick so, we would- we had to do a lot of things around the house that most young people don't have to do. We lived close to my mother's mother for a number of years, and then we moved further over at another place. And, we just had a normal little childhood [laughs]- I thought it was normal.

Interviewer: Do you remember what your house looked like?

Campbell: We just had a little four room house. We did not have an inside bathroom. We did not have electricity part of the time. We had kerosene lamps, which you can believe that this was 1935-36. We did have running water in the house. We had a well. We had the old time washing machine- that was the wringer type, you know- and then when you got ready to wash, you put the washing machine out, and you put two washtubs out and then you washed and rinsed and hung them on the line to dry. And we helped our mother. Then on Saturday nights we got a bath in the washtub. [laughs] But, we just had a very, I guess it was, I thought it was a normal life, but I'm sure there's people that were a lot better off than we were, but there was people a lot worse off than we were.

Interviewer: And, thinking about the Depression and, you know, how it was affecting your family, do you remember your parents talking about Roosevelt? Were they fans of the president?

Campbell (7.44): Well, at that time, yes, I would say they were. My daddy at one time worked on the WPA⁵, which was a program that the President Roosevelt started. But, he wasn't- they weren't very much into politics. They liked Roosevelt, and we did- we listened to his speeches on the radio. And the radio was the big thing, you know, we didn't have any television of course. And we- at night we would listen to Dick Tracy⁶ and things like that on the radio. Often, got the Dick Tracy ring that you could decode messages that he gave. [Pause] It was just- it wasn't an easy life, sometimes we were just happy that Daddy killed a rabbit and that we had rabbit. My mother was a wonderful cook, and she could make things out of nothing, and I'm sure a lot of times she did.

Interviewer: Do you remember ration cards or anything like that?

Campbell: The what?

Interviewer: Rationing

Campbell (8.56): Oh yes, we had rationing stamps. Back in those days too, you used to have people that came around to your house with everything. We had a vegetable man that came by, and then we had the Watkins Salesman⁷ that came by with- and then the fuller brush man who came by. And a bakery that delivered, Highland Bakery⁸, and they delivered. In fact, the driver of the Highland truck would get my mother to decorate cakes for them. They'd have someone who wanted a birthday cake and he would bring a cake and my mother would decorate it. She was very good at that. She made wonderful cakes herself. We did have the rationing stamps. [pause] The school- I'm regressing here- the school that we went to was a four room schoolhouse, with seven grades in it. And there again you had outside bathrooms and the woodstove in the corner just like you see in the-. But we got a very good education. We had to carry our lunch everyday which was usually- much of the time we'd have a biscuit with something in it because my mother made biscuits every morning. We were happy to have that, and we were lucky to have it because some people didn't have anything.

⁵ Originally named the Works Progress Administration, this New Deal program created by Roosevelt was renamed the Works Projects Administration. It focused on providing out of work people with some type of employment. The program focused on building and/or rebuilding public places like roads, bridges, parks, etc. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Works_Progress_Administration

⁶ A popular comic strip character, Dick Tracy was a police detective. The strip was first created in 1931. It has been the inspiration for a few films. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dick_Tracy

⁷ A Watkins salesman worked for the JR Watkins Medical Co. and would travel around selling products which included medicines and personal hygiene products. <https://blog.library.si.edu/blog/2015/08/24/a-salesman-in-1917/#.YgFWii-B1O0>

⁸ The bakery is still in existence today and now has three different locations. <https://www.highlandbakery.com>

Interviewer: If Highland Bakery asked your mother to decorate cakes for them, did they pay her for it?

Campbell (10.22): Yes they did. She would pay, and my mother would make things. She would do things like if- I remember a couple of times the principal at our little grammar school, she wanted to have a luncheon for somebody, and she'd get my mother to do the luncheon. And she would make up a nice menu and do the luncheon for them. She was, like I said, a real good cook. When we had- she made wonderful Brunswick stew⁹- which my niece Giny here still has the recipe for. And so, we would have little barbeques at our church and my mother always made the Brunswick stew in a big old washpot. But these were all fun things that we did. We would have hobo suppers at our church. We would have fish-frys. And the church was really the main centerpoint of the community. That and the school, you know, because we had a lot of things at school all the time.

Interviewer: And, do you remember if the other kids at school- were they mostly members of your church or were they members of other churches too?

Campbell (11.30): Most of them, a good portion of them, were members of our church, but a few of them- we went to a Methodist church, a few of them went to the Baptist church in another community, you know. Because right in our community there was only the Methodist church. But some of them did go to other churches. But, most of my friends went to that church, you know. And we had our Sunday school class and our picnics and everything.

Interviewer: And did you have a sense for the school and your neighborhood being segregated? Did you know any kids that were Black or-

Campbell (12.05): No, there were no Black children in our school at that time. There was a Black family that lived- when I was in high school- there was a Black family that lived in our community. But they had to - they took the same bus we did but they had to go to a different school. No, it was very segregated, my high school was segregated. In fact, later on, the school wasn't, but that was in about 1968, 86. And uh, some of my husband's sisters were still in school at that time. But no, there was only this one Black family in our community. And now, we did have a Black man and woman that lived there, that was Uncle Bib and Aunt Lizzie. Her name was Lizzie. And we all loved to go to their little cabin. They lived in a little cabin back of a friend of ours house. And we loved to go there and see them because she always had a treat for ya. But that was one of our favorite places to go, but, other than that, no there- in our community there wasn't.

⁹ A tomato based stew with beans, vegetables, and small meat. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunswick_stew

Interviewer: And, did you have a sense at all- you said you listened to the radio- did you have a sense that war was brewing in Europe?

Campbell: Yes, we understood it, we understood. Of course, when the Pearl Harbor was bombed, that was a big thing. You know, we listened to the President speak then. And we studied these things in school. We studied the old history, but we studied current events too- and like the newspapers you have in your exhibit here. People would bring newspapers to school and we would discuss what was going on. We did discuss it a lot in school.

Interviewer: Do you remember that day, December 7th, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor?

Campbell: I do remember that, and I remember us having the radio on and hearing it that morning, you know. And everyone was really astonished at what happened.

Interviewer: Did you have any family members who enlisted or went into service after that?

Campbell (14.25): Yes, I had- my mother's youngest brother, James Maynard, he was in the service then. And he was, I think he was drafted probably, because he did have a family. Of course, a lot of people in our community were in there. We had one young man that went to the- he was a Navy ensign. And he was killed during the war. And as a matter of fact, his name was Micky Cochran. And we have a legion post in the area that was named after him. American Legion Post¹⁰ 216 is Micky Cochran¹¹ post, and at this time, it's still in existence. It's over in the Mapleton area now, but it still carries his name. He was the only person I remember in our community that was lost in the war. There were several people that went to our high school and people that my sister knew better than I did, young men that were killed in the war. But it was very- it was an everyday thing, and we listened to the news at night and it was devastated at what was happening.

Interviewer: Do you remember being asked to do anything for the war effort like roll bandages or-

Campbell (15.38): Oh yes, we collected tinfoil. And of course we bought saving stamps, they had the little books and you bought the saving stamps¹². And we also rolled bandages for the Red

¹⁰ American Legion Posts provide volunteer services to military operations.

https://www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/how_we_help.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.manta.com/c/mm03gfn/mickey-cochran-post-no-216-american-legion-department-of-georgia-inc>

¹² Citizens could purchase saving stamps to help support the war effort if they didn't have enough money to buy war bonds. https://www.nationalww2museum.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Elementary%20-%20Stamping%20Out%20the%20Enemy-War%20Savings%20Stamp%20Math_0.pdf

Cross and we actually knitted some stuff- I'm sure it wasn't very good, but we knitted little squares and they made afghans out of them. But we did all those things, yeah. It was....

Interviewer: Do you ever remember having to save waste fat? I remember that that was something tha-

Campbell: What was that?

Interviewer: Like cooking fat

Campbell: Oh yea, as they say, we had a bacon jar. [laughs] And yea my mother saved the bacon fat. And we used that.

Interviewer: Did you have a victory garden?

Campbell (16.25): We didn't. My grandmother had a garden, and we would get things out of there. Later, on, when we moved to another location, my mother would have a little garden. We always had tomato plants and things like that. And then of course in our community there was people that had farms and we were able to go and buy vegetables from the neighbors. And of course, if they had any extra they would give you stuff too. And there was a- my uncle lived, one of my uncles, well he actually was a great uncle, he live close by. And he had an apple orchard so we could always go get apples, climb the apple tree and get us some apples. And it was a very good life to tell you the truth. [laughs]

Interviewer: Did your mother can any of the vegetables?

Campbell (17.13): Oh yes, she canned, she canned and she made pickles. And actually, when I was only about 7 years old I canned a jar of blackberries. And we used to have something in Atlanta called the Southeastern World's Fair¹³, and the 4-H club, which we all belonged to, they had exhibits there. So I actually had an exhibit at the fair of my blackberries that I canned, and I think I was 7 years old at the time. Which I'm sure they weren't very good but anyway- [laughs] And going to the fair was very exciting every year. Lakewood Park, the big fair, came into town and we would go and spend the day. And usually a group from the church would go, and we would- and as I said we belonged to the 4-H club. They had a home demonstration agent who came out and showed you how to do things. And my mother canned everything- all the vegetables that we could get. You know, we'd get out of my grandmother's garden and other people's gardens and she canned green beans and made pickles and canned tomatoes, tomatoes

¹³ This fair occurred in Atlanta for 60 years before it was moved. <https://www.ajc.com/lifestyles/flashback-photos-when-atlanta-hosted-the-southeastern-fair/dSvVCUxK7p7tfTqh7jHgbL/>

and okra to make soup with. We did not have a freezer and even when we got electricity and my daddy want to buy my mother a refrigerator, she didn't want one. She still wanted to have the ice. We had an ice man that delivered ice, and you had a cold man that delivered cold, it was the same people usually, they did cold in the winter and ice in the summer. And there was ice plants that you could go to and buy ice. And you got big blocks of ice, 20 pounds, 50 pounds, and later on we had a really nice ice box. It was really fancy and I think it held about 50 lb of ice in it. But my mother, she just didn't want a refrigerator. I don't know why, but she didn't. And we had a wood stove- she had a wood stove that she cooked on. And that was our heat- part of our heat. We also had a smaller little heater in our living room, and that was- it was cold in the winter and hot in the summer. And, later on one year, my mother always got chickens, little chickens every year and raised chickens. And back those days the mailman delivered the little chicks. You ordered them, and he brought the little chicks to you. And then she would raise them, and then we would always have a lot of fried chicken, which we loved. That was our favorite thing for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It didn't matter to us, we liked fried chicken, so... [laughs]

Interviewer: It's delicious. Did your mother have to slaughter the chickens herself too?

Campbell: Oh yes, you just hung 'em on the line and took a knife and cut the heads off. Yeah, we did it too. We kill 'em and then you plucked them and put them in the hot water and took the feathers off of them and did the rest of the stuff to them. [laughs]

Interviewer: So, when the war came close to an end, we talked about this a little bit before, President Roosevelt died. Do you remember what that was like?

Campbell (20.36): Yes, it was very emotional time. And my mother took my sister and I downtown so we could see the train when it came through. It was very, very emotional. Everybody was crying and it was- and then- this is jumping ahead, but when the end of the World War II, you know and had the V Day things we all we went downtown. We used to go downtown a lot, into Atlanta. We would walk that mile and catch that- we had to walk a mile, catch a bus. And you had to ride the bus a number of miles, and then you got on a street car and went downtown. And we also used to go see my grandmother who lived in Decatur, and we had to do all of that and when we got downtown we had to walk down about three blocks and catch another streetcar to go to her house. It was an all-day trip, but that was fun. We loved doing it. And we would do that about once a week to go see my grandmother because, as I said, my dad was out of town working a lot, and so we had to find some amusements. And so, that was one of our trips but it was- we thought nothing of going on that trip all the way to Decatur which was a good little ways.

Interviewer: Where in Decatur did she live?

Campbell (21.58): She lived on Howard Street and that was later on. Earlier than that she lived over in the- on Westview Avenue which was over on the North- the other part of town. We used to go there too and there again, it was taking a couple street cars. But that was fun, and we had an uncle that was a streetcar conductor and, a lot of times, when we'd get on the car he would be on there and we'd get to talk to him. And you knew everybody. I meant, you know, even people downtown. When we would get down to Atlanta, there was a man who had a shoe repair place right around the corner from where we get off of the streetcar and we used to always go see him. And then, one of our favorite things to do downtown was- there was a place called the Peachtree arcade, it ran between Forsyth Street and Whitehall Street. And, it was a beautiful place, it's a shame they tore it down. But we used to go in there and they had a- that was very fascinating to me and they had a goldfish pond in the lower-level which you could go and sit and throw some pennies in. And there, we also would get our hair cut there sometimes. And also, when we went downtown, it was one of our favorite things, if we had the money, because money was short. But, to go to one of the five and ten cent stores to eat: there was Woolworth's and McCrary's and we had some cousins that worked at Woolworth's behind the counter, so we'd go visit with them. I mean, it was really- Atlanta was a great town. And, talking about the saving- I mean the rationing stamps, we also used to do things like, my mother used Octagon soap¹⁴ and they had coupons on it. So we cut out the coupons and when we saved enough, we will go to the Octagon soap store and get surprises. So we would all- that was a very big adventure to see what we could find with the coupons.

Interviewer: Oh that's fun. So tell me about that, that celebration for the end of the war.

Campbell: It was down right at- on Peachtree right at the Loews Theater. And it was a real big crowd and everybody was, you know, very excited. And, that was, we went to that. It was a big, big crowd of people but, like I said, we thought nothing, and I didn't even think mother thought nothing of us going downtown and doing things.

Interviewer: And was that then just you and your sister who went?

Campbell (24.41): Well, my sister and I and my mother would take us, you know, and my dad. Another big event we had was when they had the premiere of *Gone with the Wind* in Atlanta. And we went to that, and we did not go, of course, the first night, but we did go see *Gone With the Wind*. And that was a big deal too.

Interviewer: And you would have been in middle school then?

¹⁴ Octagon soap was a popular brand of laundry soap bars during Liz's lifetime. It is no longer manufactured. <https://www.thriftyfun.com/Where-to-Buy-Octagon-Soap.html>

Campbell: Well, grammar school-

Interviewer: Grammar school.

Campbell: We didn't have middle school in those days. We had seven grades in grammar school and four in high school. In fact, the year after I started high school, they actually went to another year in high school. They had five years in high school, but I only had to go four years. So I entered high school and I graduated 1949.

Interviewer: So, when you were in high school, what were your hopes and dreams for the future?

Campbell (25.40): Well in the high school on my side of town, most everybody just went out and went to work and we just all- we took a business course. Nobody- there was a few people at our school that went to college but, as I said, I went to West Fulton High School. Now, if you went on the other side of town to North Fulton High School, that was a different thing. They had classes more or less for college, but, on my side of town, most every dagbody went out and went to work, and you'd just hope you got a good job. And everybody went out and went to work and it was usually with Southern Belle, or Atlanta Gaslight¹⁵, Georgia Power, Sears: that was the places everybody worked. And it was really good back in the old days like that when you had anything you wanted done, you just knew somebody that worked there, and you called them and "hello, I need so-and-so." Which was very good and the same thing. I lot of people got jobs with Fulton County and with the state of Georgia. But, that was from my side of town that was all everybody wanted to do. Is they got out of school and they went to work.

Interviewer: And, before we talk about your work, I want to just think a little more about the end of the war and, do you remember, at that time, hearing anything about what had happened to the Jews in Europe?

Campbell: We studied that in school too, yeah. It was very much of a thing. Now, as far as for the Jewish people in our area, I don't really remember any Jewish families there. But there were quite a few in the Atlanta, and when you went down there you, you know, you met them. But I did not personally know anybody. But we did study all that in school. As I said, we had current events in school and we talked about everything that was happening.

Interviewer: Do you remember what it felt like to learn about the atomic bomb?

¹⁵ Still in existence today, Atlanta Gas Light is the largest distributor of natural gas in Southeast.
<https://www.atlantagaslight.com>

Campbell: Beg pardon?

Interviewer: Do you remember what it learned like- excuse me- what it felt like to learn about the atomic bomb being dropped on Japan?

Campbell: Well, I don't think that it, at that time it probably didn't- we probably wondered what was going on. We knew that they were building an atomic bomb, because, of course, up in Tennessee had places, but I don't really remember a lot about that.

Interviewer: Sure, well, so, when you graduated from high school, did you go to work?

Campbell: Actually, I went right to work, but I went to work for a friend of ours that had a construction company. And I worked with him for a while and then, later on, I went to work for a cotton broker and I had several jobs. I worked for the telephone company, and then in later years, well, I changed jobs a lot [laughs] because always something was better on the other side. [laughs]

Interviewer: So tell me about meeting your husband.

Campbell (28.52): Well, we actually grew up in the same area. He went to my high school, went to the same high school I did. Unfortunately, he had to leave high school after two years when he was to help at home because of his family situation. But we met in about 1955 through some mutual friends of ours. I was friends with this girl and he was friends with her brother, and so they introduced us. And we went together a couple of years before we got married. He wasn't too anxious to get married. He was 29 years old, about 27 when we met, I guess, 28, and he was a bachelor. So he wasn't real anxious to get married. But, I told him we had about a year- I could give him a year and that was all. [laughs] So he gave in. [laughs] Actually, he was- he had to have a serious surgery in while we were going together, and I think that that helped- helped my cause along some so...

Interviewer: Can you- can you please state his full name for the record?

Campbell: My husband's name was Ray Walton Campbell, but everybody called him- well all his family and friends called him Walt, but at work everybody called him Ray because that was his first name, which was confusing sometimes but- and he was- do you want me to tell you where he was born and everything?

Interviewer: Yes please!

Campbell (30.26): Well his mother and daddy was both from the north Georgia area, and his dad was from Rockmart; his mother from Dallas. But for some reason, they moved to South Georgia to Moultrie. I think because maybe her brother lived down there, and he was born in Moultrie. And then they came and he was born on April 15th, 1928. And then they stayed in there for a little while. Then they came back to the Rockmart area, and it was seven and a half years before he had any siblings. And then he has four siblings fairly close together. He has a sister that was seven and a half years younger than he was. And then he had - they had another sister and a brother, and then his younger sister is actually 17 years younger than he is. So he was a father figure kind of to the family.

Interviewer: What did he tell you about his childhood? Did he tell you any stories?

Campbell (31.29): Well, they, yeah they lived in the country, right outside of Rockmart if they had a little Community called Beulah. And his mother taught school and he- his grandma- they lived near his grandmother Campbell, and his grandmother kept him. And he was the idol of the family because he was the grandson and he was on one of the closest grandkids there, so everybody loved him. His whole family, all his aunts and uncles, he was the thing. And [laughs] I guess he was for seven and a half years until he had a sister, so... [laughs]

Interviewer: And, yes, you told me that he had to leave high school to help support his family. Would he- what did he do to help out?

Campbell: Well, he went to work at Sears, and I know his sisters and brothers they say if it hadn't been for him, they wouldn't had like Santa Claus and stuff. But he did help at home. He was very good to his mother. And I'm sure he- I don't know financially how much he did- but he helped there, you know. And then as soon as he turned 18, that's when he joined the Navy.

Interviewer: So how did he make the decision to enlist in the Navy?

Campbell (32.48): Well he and a friend, Phillip Martin, got to talking about it and so they decided to go down and enlist. And so, Philip's father, Mr. Martin, went with him and they wanted to enlist for 4 years and Mr. Martin said "no, no, two years is enough." So they enlisted for two years and then they went to- they were sent to Norfolk, Virginia, for their training, you know.

Interviewer: And what did he tell you about his training? Did he tell you anything about his training?

Campbell: Honestly, he didn't talk a lot about it. He talked more about when he was on the ship and more about that.

Interviewer: And what ship did he end up serving on?

Campbell (33.27): He was on the USS Waldron¹⁶, which was a destroyer. Number 699 is the number of the ship, and they were stationed in New Algiers which is across the river from New Orleans. And they did make cruises to Cuba and places like that. And he really, I don't know how he managed on the destroyer, because the only other time we were on a ship, on a cruise later on, he was deathly seasick. So I don't know how he managed on the ship, but he did. And then when he got out of the- well I'm skipping ahead too far.

Interviewer: Uhm well, what did he tell you about what it was like serving on that ship?

Campbell: Well he said it- but you know, very close company, of course. And they- he really didn't, honestly he didn't talk a whole lot about it.

Interviewer: Did he tell you about his friendship with other sailors?

Campbell (34.23): Yes, well, as I said, he went into the service with his friend Philip Martin and they were did go to Norfolk together. And the day that they were on the train going up there they met this other guy from Georgia named James Willis, and they became very good friends. And then they did the usual things, I think, when they were in Norfolk, what Sailors- whatever Sailors do.

Interviewer: [laughs] Do you know what sailors do? Or did?

Campbell: [laughs] I'm sure they had a good time.

Interviewer: So, and you mentioned that they did some cruises to Cuba and other places. Did he share any experiences of Cuba with you?

Campbell: He liked to, but- a lot- so in later years he went back twice after that long trip there because he really was fascinated with it, I think. They did make some cruises down to the Jamaica and places like that. He didn't like that too much, but he did like Cuba a lot. And of course, it was not like, you know, what's before it was the so...

Interviewer: It was before Fidel Castro¹⁷?

¹⁶ The USS Waldron is named after a naval aviator who led a fleet of torpedo bombers in WWII. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Waldron

¹⁷ Castro was the communist leader of Cuba from 1959 until 2008. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Fidel-Castro>

Campbell (35.35): Castro, before Castro, you know. But he enjoyed that. And then, after that he got out of the service in 1948, he was in the Navy Reserve for four years and the Air Reserve. And they met up at Dobbins Air Force Base, and then too they had- they also had a place over in Athens they had to go to sometimes. So, he was in that for four years.

Interviewer: And what was his rank when he was discharged?

Campbell: He was a Seaman First Class.

Interviewer: So, when he got out, you said he was in the reserve and how long was he in the reserve?

Campbell (36.21): For four years, and it was of course just a weekend thing. I think maybe they didn't have to go every weekend, it was just some weekends. But, occasionally they would take, when they were at working at the Naval Air Station, they will get to take a flight some place and they would fly down to Pensacola or different places like that on the weekends. And so he enjoyed that, I think that more than he did being on the Destroyer.

Interviewer: So when you met him, where was he working?

Campbell (36.52): Well, after he got out of the service, he immediately went to work for Abbott Laboratories¹⁸, a pharmaceutical company, and that was in 1948. And he worked there for 35 years and was able to retire at 55. That was their policy. If you had been there 35 years and you were 55 years old, you can retire. So he did.

Interviewer: And when you met each other and you were going together for a bit and you were trying to convince him to marry you [laughter], what were your hopes and dreams for the future?

Campbell (37.26): Well, I knew what a good person he was, and so I just hoped that we be able to get married and have a house, have a home. And we did not- we never had children, and I think one reason was the fact that he had four younger brothers and sisters, you know. He didn't really care about having children, and I didn't care either. We got married and, like I said, about two years later, we bought a little house up in Smyrna. Back in those days, we didn't make much money but it seemed like it went a long ways. And, we had a nice little house in Smyrna, which we still own, and I live there now. It's- later on we were able to buy a place up on Lake Hartwell, which is in North Georgia, near a little town called Lavonia, and we lived there for 35 years, mostly. We still kept our house here in Smyrna because we came down all the time for

¹⁸ The company is still in operation today. <https://www.abbott.com>

birthdays and stuff. We came down almost every weekend. We reversed ourselves. When we were working, we went to the lake on the weekends, and then, later, we came to Atlanta on the weekends.

Interviewer: So, backtracking just a little bit, can you tell me about your wedding?

Campbell (38.49): Well, we got married on October the 19th 1957, and we had a church wedding at a little church actually was across the street from the high school where I went called Bethany Methodist Church¹⁹. And it was in the fall, so we had a fall theme I guess. I had a champagne colored dress which I still have, and my husband, he wore- Walt wore a brown suit, in there- we had that theme. And my sister, Virginia, she arranged our little wedding reception at the church. I don't remember exactly how many people we had but it was- wasn't an elaborate thing, but we had a nice wedding. I should have brought you a picture of it. [laughs] I didn't, but anyway. And then we went to a- we got married and we went to New Orleans on our honeymoon. So then he showed me around and the places that he'd been when he was in service.

Interviewer: And, what do you remember about New Orleans?

Campbell (40.01): Well, I remember the one thing I wanted to do really bad was to go to the Roosevelt Hotel to the Blue Room. On Saturday nights, we used to listen to the radio, and they had a performance every Saturday night from the Blue Room atop The Roosevelt Hotel²⁰. And I thought that was a wonderful thing. And so, that was one of the things I wanted to do, but it was very- I mean, I had not travelled a lot and New Orleans was a pretty, even back in- a wild town in the French Quarters and everything. We did all the things that people do in New Orleans, and we had a picture made in front of Jackson Square and we went to the French Quarters.

Interviewer: Do you remember listening to any jazz music while you were there? Were you a fan of jazz? Jazz music

Campbell: Oh yes, but we were not- he was not a dancer much, but we did all those things you know.

Interviewer: So, you mentioned that he showed you some of the places where he'd served. Do you remember any of those places?

¹⁹ The church is still operational. <https://www.bethanyumc.net>

²⁰ The Blue Room was a performance venue in downtown New Orleans that drew high society and performers like Frank Sinatra, Louis Armstrong, Ray Charles, and more. <https://www.therooseveltneworleans.com/events/the-blue-room.html>

Campbell (41.08): We actually did take the ferry, a ferry across to Algiers. And then, he just told me how they used to go to the French Quarters and things that they did there.

Interviewer: And how did- how did he stay in touch with his buddies from the Navy?

Campbell (41.26): Well, he didn't- his friend Phillip Martin, who was a lifelong friend, we would live close to them. And then James Willis, that friend that he had made, who was from Washington Georgia, actually moved to Smyrna and went to work for Lockheed²¹. And so, therefore, we became friends with him again. And then my husband was very active in the American Legion. He was a member of American Legion Post 156 in Bolton, and he was a- he was a 72 year member of the American Legion when he passed away. And so, we were active down there doing things. He held every kind of office in the American Legion, from post commander down to janitor because everybody had to do their share. We did a lot of Legion work, and then, after we got married, I belong to the Auxiliary and was elected president of it. And we did a lot of social work there in the community and for veterans. But he and Phillip stayed lifelong friends, and he and James did too. And, they both belonged to the American Legion. We all were friends there and he did keep in touch with a couple of other people out of his- from his ship. One in Johnstown, Pennsylvania that we used to correspond with. And then, later on, he did join this- there was a club for the USS Waldron, a club. So he found a lot of names of people and we would contact them by phone. Unfortunately, we never went to one of the reunions, but we did- he did keep in contact with a few people.

Interviewer: Why do you think, and you could speak for yourself too, the involvement with the American Legion was important to him?

Campbell (43.19): It was very important. As I said, he was a founding member of that post. I don't know, it just seemed like it was a community thing, you know, and he just really enjoy doing the work. They would go to the veterans hospital once a month and take gifts. And we sent gifts at Christmas time there. He just liked doing that. He was very, just very involved in it. He was also a life member of the Elks Club²² in Atlanta. And, we were never that active at the Elks Club because all our time was taken up at the American Legion. [laughs]

Interviewer: So, Walt just passed away recently, and can you tell me when he passed? Your husband, he- he just passed away recently.

²¹ This company is an aerospace, weapons, technology manufacturing corporation that today is called Lockheed Martin Corporation. <https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-us>

²² The Elks was a fraternal order founded in NYC. It does charity work and works with veterans. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benevolent_and_Protective_Order_of_Elks

Campbell: He passed away on May the 6th 2021. He was 93 years old, and, unfortunately, he was bedridden the last three years of his life. I will say that during the time after he retired and when- we- when he got sick, we traveled a lot. Not out of the country, other than we did go to Mexico and to Canada, but we did travel about, I think that we went to like 46 of the states. And we loved to drive on our trips, so we took trips everywhere.

Interviewer: What kind of car did you have?

Campbell (44.50): Oh we always had a good car. [laughs] He liked cars. Well, we used to have a used car because- because we had to have two cars to get back and forth to work. We had a 1951 or 2 Oldsmobile²³ that we took on a trip to California the second year we were married. We drove 6,010 miles in two weeks and saw a lot of the stuff across the country. We loved to drive and we loved to travel that way.

Interviewer: So, reflecting on your life with Ray, how do you think World War II and its aftermath affected your experiences? What- how did WWII kind of- what role did that play in the world that you knew?

Campbell: Well, it played an important role in the fact that- unfortunately he was unable to take advantage of the educational thing- but we wouldn't had a house if it hadn't been for the VA loan that we got on our house, because that's the only way we were able to buy a house at the time. So, I don't- I guess because of the fact that he was in at the end of the war, it did not affect him as much as it would have some people earlier. But he was very, very patriotic, and he did enjoy telling people about his Navy days.

Interviewer: What do you think serving in the Navy meant to him?

Campbell: Well, I think it was a growing up period for him too, and that was the first time, I'm sure, he'd ever been away from home. And so, he did not learn any craft in the Navy. I think he was a cook at one time, so therefore he did learn to do some cooking. I think that it helped him to grow up and be independent, you know, and be out on his own because he'd always been the older brother at home, and the- first the only child, and then the older sibling. So, I think it really was a liberating experience for him.

Interviewer: And what did it mean to you? Was it something that you were proud of, his service?

²³ Produced by General Motors, this brand of car was extremely popular in the 1980s.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oldsmobile>

Campbell: Yes, I was very proud of it, and I'm very proud of his service at the legion. We did a lot of good work for people, and he was very, as I said, very patriotic. We- he was, I don't know, it was it was very, a very good experience.

Interviewer: What are the biggest changes you've noticed between that time right the end of World War II and now in this country and in the world?

Campbell (47.52): Well, it's not the same place at all. I mean- right now, if you ask me how I feel, I've never been afraid to go out, but now I am. When I was growing up, we thought nothing of, as I said, walking a mile by ourselves. We knew everybody along the road. Now people don't know their neighbors. We- in the community where we bought our house, we were friends with two or three people, but even back then in 1960, people in our neighborhood- we worked and most- a lot of people stayed home all the time. But it's just a different world. I meant I can't even tell you how much I miss being able to go to Atlanta and enjoy things. We did that. We, as I said, there was nothing unusual for us to go down there for the day with my mother, and we would- and you knew all your neighbors and you had a lot of relatives around. And now, your family is scattered from one end to the other, and it's just a completely different world.

Interviewer: So thinking about specifically, you and your family decided to donate your husband's Navy uniforms to our Museum. Can you tell me a bit about that decision? I know it was through a friend, through Steven Hodges.

Campbell: Well this- when we were moving out of our house in Lavonia, that was after my husband got sick and I was having to sell my house there, and we were up cleaning out the house and my nephew, Bill Black, was there. And I knew my husband's Navy uniform was in our little crawl space in the attic, and so we got the suitcase down and opened it up and Bill was really fascinated with having such a- his uniform was in perfect condition. And I said, I don't know what we'll do with this, I guess we could take it to the Goodwill or something. Bill insisted, no we're not going to do that, there's some place that would like to have this and so actually it was Bill Black did most of the work. He crusaded for this, and the man that you were mentioned, I haven't- not even had the pleasure of meeting yet. But Bill knows him and they- he- Bill was just very excited about getting the uniform put some place because he's a very patriotic person too.

Interviewer: So, thinking about patriotism and, why do you think it's important for students to learn about history?

Campbell: About history?

Interviewer: Mhmm

Campbell (50.51): I think it's very important, and I think it's really a shame these days that they are not teaching all types of history in school. I meant, when I was in school, we had world history, Georgia history, and, you know, and you knew about how the country was formed and you were proud of it. So many things now are changing that- I hate to say this, I'm just a plain Southern person. [chuckles] I'm a southern lady. I was born and bred and raised in the Georgia area, and I just really- it hurts me to see my heritage torn down. I meant, like I said, I was born and raised here and now when I get ready to- if I have to go to Atlanta- I don't even know where I'm going because street names have changed. Everything has changed. I'm not sure it's for the better. But who am I to say. I know I, and when you were asking about black families, there were none in our neighborhood, but my husband worked with some really nice people that we're still in contact with some of them now. I worked with very nice people, black people, and we were friends. And I don't know, life's just changed. [laughs]

Interviewer: What- what do you hope that students will take away from learning about yours and your husband's lives? Like, what do you hope they'll learn?

Campbell: I would hope that they would see that the simpler life may be- might be the best life. I, like I said, we did not make a lot of money. We were fortunate because he did go to work for a good company, so we were able to come out in our life and have things. But I hope that they would learn that there's something more than- more than money. There's friendship. There's community and life-long friends that you make in grammar school and you still have. Unfortunately, many of mine have passed away, but I still- in fact, the area where I grew up, we have a little get together once a year, a little reunion for the people from my community, which is very nice to see people. I don't know, I just can't tell you that life has changed so.

Interviewer: Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you'd like to talk about?

Campbell (53.48): Well, I'm not sure there is. We pretty well covered it. My husband's, well I should have gave you my husband's parents names and- which I did not do. His father was Fred Thomas Campbell. His mother was Gladys Huckabee Campbell. And they- his father was a very good man, as I said this, this- they came along and had four siblings close together. And therefore, that's why Walt had to leave school and help out at home. But, I'm still very close with my sister-in-laws and was with his brother, who passed away about five years ago. I talk to his sisters almost every day. I consider them like sisters to me.

Interviewer: And your- your nephew and his wife were here today. How are they related to you?

Campbell (54.48): Well my niece, Giny, Virginia Black, and Virginia Ardale Black, and her husband Bill Black. This is- my sister had three children, a son, Jay Ardale, and then two daughters, Betsy, Elizabeth, she's Elizabeth. This one's Virginia. They were- they have the same names as me and their mother. And we've always been close to all our nieces and nephews. Not having children, we kind of borrowed kids all the time. So we're always real close to them. Actually, Giny was here with me today, and I- not only was she my niece, but later on, we worked together at a doctor's office for several years. So, therefore, we were working companions as well as relatives. And, I can't even tell you how much they both mean to me. And then they have a son, Brandon, who is my great-nephew. But since my husband's- ever since we've been here and he's been sick, Brandon works close by. And he comes to see me almost every day at lunch time, and so we're just very close to my relatives. And also, we were very close to my husband's. My husband had his sister that was next to him passed away early, and her husband passed away when our- his nephew, Bob, was only seven years old. So he was kind of a father figure to Bob. And they had a sister, Pam. So they were kind of like- we helped raised those two. And then we have several other nieces and nephews with we're close to, but we're closer to those two- and to my niece Jen Jen Betsy, and my nephew, her brother, Jay, who passed away a number of years ago. But, we're very close. Our family is small but close.

Interviewer: Well, thank you so much for speaking with me today and sharing your story and your husband's story. I really appreciate it, so thank you for being here.

Campbell: Well, I think it's a privilege that you are doing this, and I'm so excited, and I've been telling everybody about it. And, I'm- hopefully that when you get the exhibit up, we will be able to come and visit.

Interview: Definitely, I look forward to keeping in touch.

Campbell: Thank you so much for your work!

Interviewer: Thank you!