

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Mary McCaffrey

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: November 2, 2013

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is November second. This is Therese Strohmer, and I'm at the home of Mary McCaffrey in New Bern, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina of Greensboro. Mary, would you please state your name the way you'd like it to read on your collection?

MM: Mary Ward McCaffrey.

TS: Okay. Well, Mary, why don't we start off by you having me tell—telling me a little bit about growing up? When and where were you born?

MM: I lived—born in Canton, Massachusetts, but at the hospital in Norwood; Norwood Hospital, Massachusetts, 1931; time of the Depression.

TS: Nineteen thirty-one?

MM: Yes.

TS: Were you—Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MM: I have a brother, three years older, and then myself, and then two years younger is another brother, Hugh, and then ten years younger than that is another brother, John.

TS: What was your oldest brother's name?

MM: William Francis Ward, Jr.

TS: Okay, so—

MM: And Hugh—Hugh's name was Hugh Patrick Ward.

TS: Hugh Patrick?

MM: Yeah, and John's name was John Michael Ward.

TS: There we go; we got all those names. And then your son is—was Michael Patrick?

MM: My son was Michael Patrick—

TS: That's right.

MM: —McCaffrey.

TS: Your oldest son.

MM: Yeah.

TS: What was it like growing up?

MM: I lived in a small town twenty miles from Boston. My father lived his entire life on Rockland[?] Street; about five different places on Rockland Street over the years, and—

TS: His whole life?

MM: His whole life, yeah. And I lived on Rockland Street, actually, until I went in the navy; back and forth all the time. Different levels—Actually, I lived in two different—three different houses, [unclear].

TS: You lived in three different houses while you were growing up on there?

MM: Yeah, yeah. And I went to the Catholic sister school, Canton [St. John the Evangelist School?], first through eighth grade, and then I went to South Boston and went to Archbishop Cushing Central High School for Girls in South Boston, for nine, ten, eleven, twelve grades---MM corrected later]. Then I was three years at Mass General Hospital

[Massachusetts General Hospital], and then I joined the navy, so I was always close to home.

TS: Close to home?

MM: Yes.

TS: Well, what did your folks do for a living?

MM: My father was in business. He worked for the railroad at one time, and during the Depression he didn't work anymore in—in Boston, but he had to take the train every Monday and go to—to New York and work out of an office. He lived in a—like, a business motel—hotel type of thing, and did his work from there, came home on—on Friday, and he said during the Depression—he sent me a letter—letter that my mother would keep for me to have later—that people would—he would see bodies going by his window, where people were jumping out of the windows committing suicide during the Depression and losing everything.

TS: Oh. Do you still have those letters?

MM: I do, yes.

TS: Wow.

MM: Yes. I was reading them over the weekend. And so, he did have different businesses in [the] town of Canton and they didn't do well. He lost—He went completely bankrupt in about—What?—1935 or something like that, and we had to move up the street to my father's parents' house. His mother and father had died, and his sister Winnie who was a single lady who was a lawyer, she inherited the house. Well, we had to move up to be with them because we didn't have any money, and for years my folks kept—they paid for the furniture that was in storage and things like that, so they—he lost everything. So finally—And my brother Bill realized after my father had died, my father had paid back all of the money that he owed people over the years—five and ten dollars a month for years and years and years, and he owed nobody anything—but he was advised to go bankrupt to—like most people did, but he didn't want to do that.

TS: So he—he just kept paying everybody as he could?

MM: Yeah, but he worked for—he worked for the state in Boston, twenty miles from home, and had to do with insurance examinations for the people who worked for the state, and he would—he worked there for quite a long time. This was after the Depression and everything. But he always had the feeling that he—he was a failure, after losing everything, and he—he died when he was seventy-two years old. He was a very smart person. He used to teach the—the immigrants English for nothing. He would do this as—just as a nice thing to do for people, and when I went to school, all these people that had cobbler shops and stuff like that, they all knew Mr. Ward. So—But that’s my father, and my mother didn’t work outside of the home. But when he met her she was—she and her sister, who was an identical twin, were ticket sellers at the [B. F.] Keith’s Theater in Boston, and he used to go to all kinds of theaters.

TS: Is that how they met?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Oh, nice.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Now, do you remember anything about the Depression, as a little girl, because that would have been—

MM: Yeah.

TS: Like, you would have been just born in the middle of it.

MM: Yeah. No, I don’t remember anything. I have some pictures taken of my father’s mother and—No, not really, except I think it was very traumatic when my father had—when we had to move up the street—just, like, three houses up and across the street from where we lived, because—Well, the first Christmas we lived there, my aunt, she didn’t—she needed a housekeeper and she needed a cook, so my mother was a housekeeper and a cook, and—but the first Christmas we didn’t have a Christmas tree on our first floor, we had to have it down in the basement. There was a cement basement, and under the dining room area there were—the windows had pocketed out; that’s where we had our Christmas tree and stuff. And over the years Auntie Winnie mellowed a little bit; we had a nice—nicer Christmas. But she played the piano a lot and we would stand around the piano and sing and so forth.

But my Uncle Bert, my father's brother, lived three houses down the street so it was a—I think if it wasn't for my father's financial difficulty he would have been more pleasant. He wasn't angry, he wasn't swearing at people or anything, but you could tell he just was not happy.

TS: Maybe withdrawn a little?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Yeah.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Now, did you—did you play the piano? I see there's a piano right over here.

MM: I took piano lessons but I never ended up playing very well.

TS: No? Who plays this piano?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MM: If I was going to—Well, I would do, like, [singing] three, three, three; three, three, three; three, five, one, two, three. Four, four, four, four; four, three, three, three, three; two, two, three, two, five.

TS: I consider that playing. [both laugh] That would be playing for me.

MM: But it didn't come easy for me and I never did master the piano, but my Aunt Winnie bought me that piano hoping that I would learn.

TS: Yeah.

MM: But my girls did; Patty and Terry took—

TS: How long have you had it? It's beautiful.

MM: Oh, way back in—got it in [Washington] D.C. —

TS: Yeah?

MM: —many years ago.

TS: Yeah. It's beautiful.

MM: Yeah. My father played piccolo. He was with a big, local American Legion band and he—he led—he was in charge of the whole thing, but he just played the piccolo or the flute; one of those. My Uncle Bert played the big drums and Auntie Winnie played the piano, so they're [a] very musical family, I just didn't inherit any of those traits.

TS: Yeah.

MM: And Michael was good; he played the trumpet. And [unclear]—

TS: Is that your son?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Did your girls play anything?

MM: Not really. They took piano lessons but they didn't really—Now, Patty, she could play—she could play the best but not wonderful.

TS: Right.

MM: She had—They were very busy in school and they got—they got real—all three of the kids got really good marks, the girls were cheerleaders at [Havelock High School—MM corrected later], and Patty was the president of the student council, Terry was something else. So they were very active in school, got good marks, and goal oriented.

TS: Did they take after you? Is that how you were, as a—as a young girl?

MM: I always got good marks.

TS: Yeah?

MM: And I was never very sporty. They—They were very sporty; they would run track and all that kind of thing.

TS: Well, you didn't have as many opportunities, either.

MM: No, we would stand out for recess and talk to each other.

TS: Is that—

MM: Yeah.

TS: Were you social?

MM: [chuckles] No, my friends weren't any more social than I was.

TS: No?

MM: We just stood around and talked. [chuckling]

TS: Well, now, do you remember Pearl Harbor?

MM: I do; December eighth—seventh.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Seventh.

MM: Seventh. Yeah, I was at the Bolivar Pond, the next street over from where I lived, and there was a camp on the property right near the pond, and the men from the Legion would come up there. So they—they drifted right on up there to talk at [Johnny Lynch's] camp. I do remember that very well. The war; didn't know what it meant and all that.

TS: No?

MM: No.

TS: Do you remember—Do you remember anything about, like, the day Pearl Harbor was bombed; how your family reacted; your mom or your dad?

MM: They were—They were upset and—and my father was angry, and I was ten years old.

TS: Yes.

MM: So I remember the day, I remember being up there at the pond, but I don't remember much more about it than that. But it was very sad.

TS: Then your father went into the military?

MM: He was in—He must have been in the naval reserves because he was—he was called up—

TS: Okay.

MM: —to work at—in Boston at the naval yard, I guess it was, or something like that. He was very intelli—He was a—an intelligent person, and he—he could do paper[?]
—I think he was a pharmacist mate—which doesn't make any sense to me, but that's what the slot was that he filled for that.

TS: Okay.

MM: And he was already a college graduate from Boston College. And my mother's twin's husband was from Holy Cross [College of the Holy Cross], so there was always this—

TS: Competition? [chuckles]

MM: —competition between the two colleges.

TS: Sure.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Sure.

MM: So he was—They were all very patriotic [unclear] the Legion. I've got pictures here of me dressed up in the—the Legion auxiliary—

TS: Oh, is that right?

MM: —when I was a little drum majorette in the band. We rode, like, three miles up to the cemetery on Memorial Day and they would have all kinds of meetings; military—

TS: Yeah.

MM: —American Legion things and so forth. It's a very patriotic town—a small town—and don't have any traffic lights, or didn't in those days, and one day the—one of the policemen was out in the middle of town, where the fire station was right near the main street, and so if they were busy [unclear] Arthur Fitzgerald would be out at the intersection there, and one time a man came by and he said to the policeman, "Where's Rockland Street?"

And the policeman said, "Where are—Who are you going to see?"

And he said, "Bill Ward."

He said, "Oh, he's not home. He'd gone up to visit Aunt Sue." [chuckles] It was that kind of a town.

TS: Right.

MM: Everybody knew where everybody else was.

TS: Right.

MM: So it was a nice town to grow up in.

TS: What kind of things did you do for fun?

MM: Stood around and talked to my friends. I did belong to the 4-H club, and I did—I'd—I'd learned how to sew but I didn't enjoy any of that. Over the years I learned how to sew, knit, and crochet and sew—

TS: Okay.

MM: —but it was hard for me; it was just not my natural thing. But I would do it and I would finish, and I remember the time I made mittens—I was in the fourth grade—with all the fingers.

TS: That's pretty impressive.

MM: Yeah. Yeah. And then when my brother Bill—In 1950 he was over in Korea, I made him a pair of argyle socks, and he was gone the whole time—it took me the whole time he was gone to Korea to make the socks for him.

TS: [chuckles]

MM: And then when he got home, his wife said she gave him the socks and he wore the socks, and then she washed them and they were about five times longer than they were when he had them to begin with. So I'm not manually dexterous, as far as that goes. I can do things and I get it finished and it looks okay, but it's not easy for me to do that.

TS: Yeah.

MM: I don't like to write letters; things like that. I do—do what I have to do.

TS: Yeah.

MM: But I'm slow, you know.

TS: Well, now, did you—Growing up, did your family, like, listen to the radio with the—President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt and—

MM: Yes.

TS: —the *Fireside Chats*, and things like that?

MM: Yes, yeah. Yeah, they did. We had the radio. We didn't even have a TV when I—Even when I went in the navy in 1955 [December 1955—MM corrected later], I—they—we didn't have a TV at all.

TS: Just the radio?

MM: Yeah, yeah. Or they might have before I went off to training and so forth, but I don't remember sitting in the house and watching TV.

TS: What'd you think about, or what'd your family think about, Roosevelt; the president?

MM: My father didn't like him at all.

TS: Oh, he didn't? No?

MM: No, because I think my father was a—Was Roosevelt a Democrat?

TS: Yes, yes.

MM: My father was Republican. My Aunt Winnie was Republican too; I don't know.

TS: Right.

MM: They were—My father did not like Roosevelt.

TS: Or what about Eleanor [Roosevelt]?

MM: My mother thought she was the ugliest woman alive.

TS: Oh. [both chuckling]

MM: Yeah. And my Aunt Winnie—the lawyer—she was just the opposite to my father.

TS: Oh, is that right?

MM: Yeah, they were very different.

TS: So she was, like, really supportive of the president and—

MM: Yeah, yeah. Every night after dinner, she would go down—which was three houses down the street—visit Uncle—Uncle Bert and Aunt Alice. And this is a cute story. When I was about four years old, I would go down to visit Aunt Alice and talk to her; she has a son—had a son a year younger than I, Albert, and I'd go down. But this time I just walked down. It's, like, two or three houses in between the—their house and my house. And Aunt Alice was doing something, and after she washed dishes or did something she'd put some lotion on her hand. And she was rubbing it on and I said, "What's that?"

She said, "That's Hinds Honey and Almond Cream."

And I said, "How is that?" And so she repeated it again, and I said, "Where did you get it?"

She said, "Down at the bottom of the street at the drug store."

“Thank you.”

So I walked out and I walked all the way down to the bottom of the street, which is about a half a mile or a mile; half a mile probably.

TS: And you're three?

MM: I was probably four.

TS: Three or four, okay.

MM: Yeah. And I walked down and went into the store where Ms. Mildred [Gallagen?] worked, and she said, “What do you want, Mary?”

I said—I said, “I want some Hinds Honey and Almond Cream, please.” So she gave it to me. I said, “Thank you,” and I walked out.

TS: [laughing]

MM: I didn't know you had to pay for things like that, and that was kind of cute.

TS: What happened?

MM: Well, I took it and went home and later on Mildred called my mother and she said, “How do you like the Hinds Honey and Almond Cream?”

My mother said, “It's very nice but I—She said she got it down at your drugstore.”

And she said, “Yes.” She said, “I don't think Mary knows she's supposed to pay for things.” [both chuckle]

TS: That's cute.

MM: So it was a very—I felt very—I was very liked—very loved; lots of good family [unclear]. Nobody in the family had any question that they weren't loved. We have a lot of cousins and a closeness there, and when my mother—my mother's twin would come over from—she lived about five miles north of Boston, where we lived twenty miles south of Boston. Aunt Alice—Auntie May[?] would come with Uncle Paul and their four little girls, and as soon as we realized that they were driving up the road here whoever was nearest to the front door would run quickly to the front door and take the bell off of the back of the—the doorbell so that when—because as soon as the kids came in the house they would ring that thing; ring it!

TS: [chuckles]

MM: It was not the same kind of a house at all with those four—because the one little girl was six when the others were born; the others were born, like, one—one every year.

TS: Right.

MM: [unclear] had, so they were busy, busy. But we—we had a lot of—a lot of family and a lot of prayers for people. And when my mother and Auntie May were babes—were little kids, about two years old, when the other four kids in the family were teasing them and they would kind of come and they would kind of cry, they—[Grandpa Schreiber—MM corrected later]—he was German—would pick the tots up in his—put one on one knee and one on the other knee and he said, “Never mind, you’re worse than those who talk about you,” and so they thought that was okay because it was nonverbal communication.

TS: [chuckling]

MM: So that—that part was all good.

TS: Yeah.

MM: And when I went to—I went to school in South Boston, took—had to take the train and all that, and when I—when we graduated from school the nuns said, “Well, we thought—we want to talk to you girls about something,” and two little girls—two girls that were two years younger than we were, going to high school—they were the Brady twins; they lived up the street. We didn’t pay any attention to them, they just took the train with us and stuff. But once in a while there’d be about four of us that would—going to school—get off the train [and] instead of taking the subway back when stopped, we would walk all the way across the bridge into South Boston—it’d take us about twenty minutes—and go to school, so we would be late. And they’d say, “Oh, the train was late,” and we never said any more than that. And then finally when we graduated the nuns said, “You know, we thought we should tell you now that we always knew the train wasn’t late, because the Brady twins were always here on time.” [both chuckle] So we weren’t fooling anybody.

TS: Yeah.

MM: But high school was good. It was just a girls’ school.

TS: Did you like school?

MM: Yeah, I liked school. I studied hard, I got good marks.

TS: Do you have a favorite subject or teacher?

MM: I was good at Latin. Who needs Latin? In fact, when I went—I was accepted to go to school at Massachusetts General they had me come back and talk to the children in high school about Mass General, and I thought that was unusual because they could have had somebody gone to Saint Elizabeth's Hospital, talking about Saint Elizabeth's.

But I just did—I realize now I didn't really link the information with how things really were. I could memorize what they told me, I'd get it right on the test, and I'd be out of my mind and that would be the end of it.

TS: [chuckles]

MM: And I know that when I played—played the piano—that's where I took the piano lessons, and I'd be sitting there trying to play the piano and Sister Claire—she was really something—she'd hit my fingers with the ruler [makes slapping sound]; they used to do that. She didn't do it a lot. I don't think that's the reason I didn't do well in piano, but she used to do that.

TS: It didn't help, probably.

MM: No, it didn't help.

TS: No.

MM: No, but—but going to school, eighth grade with the nuns—that was the Saint Joseph nuns, Notre Dame [nuns] were high school, and then when I went to Mass General. I liked all the teachers; they were wonderful. And in fact, some of the patients even did sewing for me. I was going to go to a prom and I had my lovely bridesmaids dress from my brother Bill's wedding in 1950, and I—and she said, "What are you going to wear?"

I said, "I don't know. The only dress I have is the bridesmaids dress."

She said, "Bring it in. We'll—We'll cut it off and make it nice for you."

So this Blanche [unclear] was a dermatology patient and she said, "How about if we do this and we do that," and she made a lovely shawl out of something, and it looked lovely and I wore it to the party.

TS: Very nice.

MM: But you wouldn't expect a patient at the hospital to be sewing for the nurse.

TS: [chuckles] Now, did you—Was it an all-girls school that you went—through—all the way through?

MM: First through eighth grade was—

TS: Mixed?

MM: —girls and boys.

TS: Okay.

MM: And the priest—I have a—I cannot find it now. I have a picture of my eighth grade class all together with Father Lee—or Monsignor Lee; he was the pastor of the school. And then later he's the same one that's the pastor in my—the wedding pictures, and—and so he was there all along, and some of the other pictures I have are of the other two priests that were all—we [sic] all very, very close to all of these—these nuns and priests and so forth, and very secure. So it was all girls and boys in first through eighth, and then it was a Catholic high school for the girls.

TS: Okay.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Now, did you have a sense, Mary, of what opportunities you had before you in the future?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MM: I always wanted to be a nurse. I have a picture in here of me when I was about five, on the front porch of the house in a nurse's outfit; my mother made it for me; I had a cape and a little hat. I've got it here someplace. And I always wanted to be a nurse.

She took me into Mass General one time when my brother Hugh—the younger one—had a sore throat—tonsillitis—and we went to the clinic. It must have been, like, a free clinic or something, and I loved the little outfits that the—The nurses wore these black and white check outfits, and that didn't make—that didn't make—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, that's, like, on the cover of your book there, okay.

MM: Yes.

TS: I see.

MM: That didn't make me want to be a nurse, but that made me—

TS: Interested in it.

MM: —interested in it, yeah. And—But all these—these people, over all these years, were very interested in the best—the welfare of the students, and so I didn't have a problem with any of that.

TS: Well, when did you graduate from high school; what year was that?

MM: Let's see. Forty-five, [whispers, unclear]. Nineteen forty-five.

TS: Okay.

MM: Graduated from high school in '49.

TS: Okay.

MM: And I went to Mass General and graduated Mass General in '52. [phone rings]

TS: Oh, you want me to pause it for that? No?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Okay. Well, why don't you tell me a little bit about college? So you said you started that in fifty—

MM: Seventy-eight, I started taking night classes. I had worked with the nursing home from '70 to '78, on Old Cherry Point Road here in New Bern [North Carolina].

TS: Yes.

MM: And—

TS: I mean about nursing school; nursing school.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MM: Oh, nursing school. Okay, forty-nine to '52.

TS: Yes.

MM: And of course, that—in those days we had to travel for OBS-GYN [obstetrics-gynecology] teaching, we went to Boston [unclear], we went to McLean [Hospital] for psychiatric nursing and so forth. We would have to move on the subway. We would have to take our stuff on the subway in paper bags. Nobody had cars to take you to places. And I—I enjoyed all that; did well in all that stuff; and it didn't really matter what I—what—I was thinking the other day when I was in GYN floor, one of the patients said—she said, “I know how to tell fortunes. Would you like me to read—to tell you—tell your fortune?”

I guess I must have been finished with what I was doing, I said, “Oh, sure.” So she did my—

TS: Your palm?

MM: —hand, yeah. And she—Everything she said came true.

TS: Oh, is that right?

MM: Yeah.

TS: What'd she—What'd she say?

MM: She said, "You're going to have a long life. You're going to marry. You're going to travel a lot. You're going—Your husband's going to be light skin, light hair," and some other things she said, and it was all stuff that had happened. I didn't put any stock into it at the time.

TS: Right.

MM: You know?

TS: Right.

MM: But that was interesting. And when my father got very sick one time and I was at—in—in work, and everybody was very supportive because I thought—I thought—he was a diabetic, I thought they were going to take his foot off, and they did eventually but not at that particular time. The people were very kindly. People cared about you even though you were in a big place and a lot of stuff going on.

And this is a funny story. When I was working in the dermatology floor, a lady had—Well, I'm going to have to go through the details on—She had psoriasis or [unclear] or one of those, and—but she also had a lot of bowel problems and we'd have to give her enemas and things like that. Well, one time she called me into the room; she said, "I want to see Miss Ward." So I came in and the room was full of Harvard medical students all around the patient's bed; probably the—six young fellows. And she said, "I don't call this lady Miss Ward. This is Florence Nightingale. She gives the best enemas in the world." I thought I would just collapse. [chuckling] That was something.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You didn't know how to take that compliment.

MM: No, it was a compliment.

TS: [chuckles]

MM: And the first time I gave a shot to anybody—Our little hats were little fluffy, [unclear] things.

TS: Okay.

MM: And I had a patient—a young women—who was on her tummy and I was giving her a shot in the buttocks, and her hand flew up and knocked me in the hat and knocked the hat—we had four cubicles—the four patients in each cubicle, and the hat went [makes soaring noise] to each one of the cubicles it went and then landed, and I thought, “If that happens every time I give a shot I don’t think I’ll be able to stand that. [both chuckle] But that was just the first—That was—After the first six months I was doing that.

TS: Did you enjoy nursing?

MM: Yes. Had good—good friends in—in training. We didn’t waste any time, we—because you—even when you work nights you have to get up and go to classes during the day; get as much sleep as you could.

TS: What’d you do for fun in—during nursing school?

MM: We didn’t go to—Nobody had any money. We didn’t go to movies. We were so busy studying.

TS: No dances or anything?

MM: I did—I went to a dance; I think that was high school. I went with my cousin Albert; the one whose mother used the hand cream honey lotion.

TS: Oh, okay.

MM: I didn’t have any boyfriends but there were a lot of boys from Boston College High School that were on the train with us and so forth, and one time Billy Curren[?] and I won five dollars on—doing the waltz dance at a school thing. He became a priest.

TS: Is that right?

MM: But we split the five dollars; \$2.50 each. [both chuckle]

TS: Did you?

MM: I really don't think we did—Nobody dated; nobody dated. We did have regular prom and one of the girl's fathers drove us into Boston and home. Coming home from the—the dance, the lights on the car went out and he had to drive home without lights.

TS: Oh, without the headlights?

MM: Headlights.

TS: Oh.

MM: Yeah, and it was about midnight by that time, but there were enough lights along the street that if there was—wasn't too much traffic, and there wasn't, he would drive very carefully and slowly and we finally got home okay, because it was too late to get the car fixed or anything.

TS: Right; right; as it's happening.

MM: Yeah.

TS: So you graduated from nursing school and then—then what did you do? That was in '49?

MM: It was fifty-two when I graduated; 1952.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, '52, sorry.

MM: Yeah, and I worked as a clinical teaching intern at this—at the hospital.

TS: Mass—

MM: At Mass General.

TS: —General.

MM: Yeah, and I supervised students in getting information about what they needed to know for their classes and things. I remember working in the emergency room a few times, and

overnight ward, so I—they put me different places so I'd have a well-rounded combination of skills. And then my friend Ronnie—that I just heard from the other day—she was from Connecticut—Rhode Island—she wanted to go in the—in the service. Well, I never gave a thought to the military at the time but she said—so we both went and signed up for the military, and then when she got—when it's time to get orders she didn't want to go. She had met this fellow—a Filipino fellow; he just died last May. But she—she didn't want to go so I went in all by myself; didn't bother me at all. And my girlfriend—One of the girlfriends said, "I don't know why they go—she's going in the military."

They said, "They can't help it; it's in their blood."

Because when my husband, Joe McCaffrey, came—he's a Marine—came up from Camp Lejeune to my house in Massachusetts, we were going to have a little engagement party—there's my father who had been in the navy for a while, my brother Bill who had graduated from West Point [United State Military Academy in West Point, New York], so he was army, I was navy, and my brother Hugh and—my brother Hugh—two years younger—was navy, and John was only twelve years old, so he eventually went navy but he wasn't that day—so it was a very mili—And then this Marine—we bring this Marine into the family, we called him—they were talking about gyrene [nickname for a U.S. Marine] jungle bunny, deck ape, and all these slang expressions, but it was—we felt very comfortable being in the military.

TS: Yeah. Well, when you were in nursing school was when the Korean War conflict kind of heated up. Do you remember any calls from—because they had a very—they were trying to recruit nurses into the military.

MM: Yeah. I don't remember any calls but I remember we were praying for Bill because he was in the—He graduated in 1950 from West Point.

TS: Okay.

MM: Yeah, and he went into the Korean War and—

TS: Was he in Korea?

MM: Yes.

TS: Oh, he was? Okay.

MM: He was in tanks and things like that.

TS: Okay.

MM: And my husband was in Korea and that's where he got shot in the leg.

TS: Oh, that's right.

MM: He got the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, and I've got some nice pictures.

TS: That's before you met him?

MM: Before I met him, yeah.

TS: Okay.

MM: Yeah.

TS: But you don't remember having—So you weren't, like, motivated to—to do any—serve for that reason? What was it that—When your friend said, “Hey, I'm going to go check out the military—”

MM: It sounded good to me.

TS: Why? Why though? Was there something about the job you were doing that you—

MM: No, I had—I had already done—Because I had completed my length of time for—The clinical teaching intern, we got money from that in the last eight months of our nurses training if you wanted to do—go that route, because there was a little extra work you had to do for that, and so I went that route, no problem with that, and then I did it for the rest of the year, or something like that. So I liked that. It just—I didn't give a lot of thought to—I kind of went along, rode with the punches, you know?

TS: Right.

MM: Yeah, and I thought, “That would be nice.” And then when I got orders to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, I didn't know a thing about North Carolina, because people up in Boston only talk about Boston.

TS: Right.

MM: They don't talk about anybody else in the country. And so, when I went down there and I loved it; it was nice down there. As it turned out, my daughter Patty who is Marine, she was stationed down at the same building—the same part of the same building when I was at—

TS: Oh, is that right? When you were there?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

[1953-1955—MM clarified later]

MM: —at Camp Lejeune. Yeah.

TS: Well, when you—Okay, so when you—Your friend decided not to do it but you went ahead and went to the—to see the—Were you just interested in the navy or any service or—

MM: Na—Navy, yeah.

TS: Only the navy?

MM: Yeah, I think so. And—

TS: Why were you—Why no—Why were you only interested in the navy and not the other services?

MM: I don't know. Ronnie was going to go into it, and I thought since she was that would be fine.

TS: Okay.

MM: Yeah. [chuckles]

TS: So you didn't really check out any of the other ones?

MM: No.

TS: It wasn't, like, the uniform or—

MM: No.

TS: —the program they had—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MM: It wasn't the military thing, it's just that I felt patriotic and the navy sounded good to me.

TS: Okay.

MM: I didn't—And actually, my mother, she had two brothers that had been in the navy.

TS: Oh, okay.

MM: Yeah, and as I say, my father had—But no, it was a—I guess I just went along with the crowd—the few people I was with.

TS: But you—But you actually went in by yourself, then.

MM: I did, yeah, and I wasn't worried about it.

TS: What did your folks think, and your brothers?

MM: They thought it was wonderful; they thought it was great.

TS: Yeah?

MM: Yeah. And—Of course in those days I didn't phone—we didn't telephone [unclear]. But when I met my husband he had told me he had lost two toes in Korea—this is February—and I said, “Oh, so let's go to the beach,” because I had to see which toes he lost.

TS: [chuckles]

MM: So next week or so in later February [1954—MM clarified later] we went down to the beach, and he had all of his toes, and I said, “You’ve got all of your toes.”
And he said, “Well, they grew back.”

TS: [chuckles]

MM: I said, “I’ve already told my mother that you lost the toes in Korea.”
And he said, “Well—”
And then I said—he said, “Well, what did your mother say?”
My mother said, “Don’t trust him.” [both laughing]

TS: And how long were you married?

MM: Fifty-four years. Yeah.

TS: Very nice.

MM: My family liked him a lot, and all the families got along well. His grandmother’s name was the same as mine, Mary McCaffrey, and he had a—his father was the oldest of five boys and one girl. Their father was a policeman up in New Hampshire and he was killed early—No, he had Bright’s disease [Bright’s disease is a historical classification of kidney disease] or something and he—he died young, leaving Granny with all these kids to raise. Well, they all graduated from college. Joe’s father didn’t. He was the oldest and he went to work right away. He worked at the mill. They had a mill up in Lincoln, New Hampshire. And—But all the other four boys graduated. One was in charge of—One was head of all of the school system curriculum or something up in New England, and he was in New York at one point; [Uncle?] Arthur; [unclear] forget his name. And one was a general in the army, and one was a major or a colonel in the air force, and the other one worked for General Electric. So they—they got their education, but Joe’s father didn’t go to college, but he was very smart and he was looked up to in the town.

TS: Well, when you went in the—in the navy, then your brother was in Korea still, or he had been in Korea? Been there and back? How long was he in the military?

MM: He’s still—He retired—

TS: Oh, he retired

MM: —when he was sixty-five years old.

TS: He's career?

MM: Yeah, yeah. He still goes up to West Point. He was up to West Point twice last month when they—they were doing things for the Thayer Hotel [historic hotel on the campus of the United States Military Academy at West Point] which is up there. I've been in the Thayer Hotel and—But they had—they were dedicating a wing to a different—Madeleine Albright was one person, next week was somebody else. So he has a place up in—near West Point; Goshen is the name of the town, and so he goes up to that. His first wife died of cancer of the brain, and she was friendly with this lady who would—whose husband used to do Elaine's hair and Michelle—Marie Louise would make wigs out of people's hairs. So for years, Marie Louise made wigs for—for Elaine, and then after Elaine got worse and so forth she—they used to go to yard sales and everything. The kids didn't know each other that well but they'd seen each other, but they came from different towns.

So after Elaine died Bill had—they would have a—Florida—place they'd go in the winter, down to Florida and up to New York in the good weather. And so, Bill would go up to—back to New York and Marie Louise would call and say, "Elaine, give me a call." She didn't know Elaine had died.

TS: Oh.

MM: And so—And Bill didn't call because he couldn't remember her last name. So a few months later he did the same, and so they got talking on the phone. He said, "Let's go out and have a cup of coffee," so they did that and about six months later they decided to get married.

And we were up at the wedding up there in New York and M.L., we call her, her cousin was sitting at the table that we were sitting at and she said, "I think—" she said, "I remember when Marie Louise said, 'I think I'm going out on a date.'" [both chuckle] She's been wonderful all these years, but that was a—arranged in heaven from Elaine.

TS: Yes, it sounds like it.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Well, why don't you tell me about when you first went into your training? So you—you signed up as a [*sic*] officer—

MM: Yes.

TS: —as a nurse in the—in the navy. How—How long was your time period that you signed up for? Do you recall?

MM: I don't remember.

TS: Yeah? Well, what was it like? What'd you have to do first?

MM: Well, we went down to Saint Albans [Naval Hospital], Long Island—

TS: Okay.

MM: —in December [1955—MM clarified later], and we had classes and different kinds of things, but it was all—it was not nursing stuff because we—we already knew all the nursing stuff that we needed to know. But you count the narcotics at every change of shift and all that. Everything was very—exactly like you're supposed to do. And they taught us about people's rank and things like that, and I remember—I remember I was there for New Year's Eve and I went to work New Year's Day on this ward and corpsmen—two corpsmen didn't showed up for work. They had been out the night before and they were drinking and they overslept, I guess. I had to put them on report. I mean, that's what you do, and I didn't like that and they didn't like that. I don't remember what all happened.

TS: [chuckles]

MM: But I remember we—we had—we learned how to march, and this girl from Rocky Mount—Jo Struther, her name was—she never could get the feet right and he—the sergeant took his glove off his hand and he put it in her left hand and he said, “Now,” he said, “when I say left you put the foot down on the same side that the glove is in your hand.” He said, “And then after a while you'll start doing it correctly. So left, two, three four, left, two, three, four.” So that's how—he must have done that with everybody.

TS: Yeah, with a few people.

MM: Yeah, yeah. But I—

TS: Was it—Was it hard for you to learn any of that?

MM: No, I didn't have any trouble with any of that.

TS: Did okay marching?

MM: Yeah, yeah. And then sometime in January [1954—MM clarified later], I don't remember exactly the length of time, whether it was six weeks or eight weeks that we spent down at Camp—at Long Island, [unclear] Cherry Point [Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in Havelock, North Carolina].

TS: Saint Albans?

MM: Not Cherry Point but Camp—Camp Lejeune [Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, North Carolina].

TS: Okay.

MM: Yeah, and in those days we took the train down, got off at Rocky Mount [North Carolina]. There were two other girls with me; they had the same orders. And we got off and the bathrooms were—were for black people and white people; you had to—

TS: Segregated?

MM: Segregated, yeah. I had never seen that up in Massachusetts.

TS: What'd you think about that?

MM: Well, I didn't give a lot of thought to it but I thought that was unusual. And we got back, then there was a bus that took us from Rocky Mount down to Camp Lejeune and we got there about three o'clock in the morning, and we went to the mess hall and they had coffee there that I think they had brewed it twenty-four hours before that; it was really dark and thick and all that. But we had that. And—And I remember—I ended up working at all the different floors. I didn't—don't remember surgery very much, but I worked in neurology and orthopedics and the mental health ward and stuff like that, and I enjoyed it. And then I worked with post-partum and labor and delivery. I think they wanted to have us go to all these different sections. And the strange thing is that the building—headquarters building—is the very same building that my daughter Patty, forty years later, she's—she's working at the same place.

TS: Right.

MM: So [unclear]—

TS: So why—how was it that you end—Well, you ended up at a Marine base because the navy did all the medical. Is that why?

MM: Yes.

TS: Okay.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Now, did you ever think that you'd end up in North Carolina? Did you have a—

MM: I never had heard of North Carolina when I was in Boston.

TS: [chuckles]

MM: They didn't even talk about the southern states.

TS: But you were okay to go there?

MM: Oh yeah, yeah.

TS: Now—And you had—had you been that far away from home, ever, before?

MM: No, never traveled much. My folks were very poor. I mean, I—Everybody in town was poor so we didn't know we were that poor.

TS: Right.

MM: People didn't have a lot of clothes; you had what you needed and that was it. But everybody else that we chummed around with were in the same boat so it wasn't a big deal.

TS: Were you homesick at all?

MM: The only time that I was homesick was when I went off from Mass—from high school to go to Mass General Hospital, and it was only twenty miles away, and when I finally got there I—I just—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: When you went to nursing school?

MM: Nursing school, and I got very homesick, and so I would call—because even when I went to high school I was—I went to Boston, and here I went to Boston Mass General. It was just a different place on the subway.

TS: On the map?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

MM: But—

TS: But a different experience, too, because you're off on your own.

MM: Yeah, on my own; yeah. And they were very—My father used to work in Boston and some—if I—when I was in high school, if I missed the train going home I would give him a phone call and say—because I'd be out walking around Boston, doing something, and he—he said, “Well, call mother,” and tell her I was going to take the next train. So I always felt like there was somebody around. I never felt like I was all by myself or alone.

TS: You had somebody to check in with and check on you, and things like that?

MM: Yes.

TS: And now you're down—But now that you're down in North Carolina?

MM: Yeah, by this time I guess I—I didn't worry about—there wasn't anything that I was concerned about down here at North Carolina, and people were nice to each other, and Joe—Joe's CO—commanding officer—was a really good friend. He admired all the stuff that Joe had done. Because my husband had been wounded overseas in Korea he—There wasn't anything that Joe couldn't do but—If, for instance, one night Joe had to go to the rifle range early in the morning and he was afraid he might oversleep because he'd been out—happy hour or something, the night before, so after he'd been to happy

hour and everything he just drove over to [Colonel] Oldenthal's yard, and he'd pull the car in and he'd turn off the engine and he was right there for when Colonel Oldenthal was ready to go to the rifle range.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So he just slept there and got up there in the morning?

MM: [both chuckling] Yeah, yeah.

TS: Well, can you tell me about—Do you remember anything about your first days when you first got to Camp Lejeune? Do you remember what you—

MM: Not really because I think I had—I felt I was among friends anyway and I didn't have trouble meeting anybody new, but they sort of—the head nurse there would get us in a group of like four or five and say, "This is what you're going to do today. You're going to go to this, this, this," and so forth, so we would just do as we were told and it wasn't any big deal. And we all stayed at the nurse's quarters, which was next to the hospital, and everything was close by. I didn't have a car. I didn't have a driver's license either; none of that stuff.

TS: I don't know a lot of people from Boston that have a driver's license, it seems sometimes—

MM: Yeah.

TS: Even today. Can you describe a typ—typical day?

MM: Well, I usually worked 7:00 [a.m.] to 3:00 [p.m.], but on—on Sundays it was 7:00 to 1:00, and I can't remember whether the next shift had—you worked longer or whatever it was. But my husband used to play golf all the time. He was a very good sport. He could play—In college he played basketball. He was wonderful [at] basketball, softball, bowling; you name it and he could do it really well. So he had—I suddenly lost my train of thought.

TS: Like, a typical day at work.

MM: Oh, right. So on a Sunday he said, “Do you know how to play golf?”

I said, “No.”

He said, “Well, when you get off at 1:00,” he said, “I’ll pick you up and we’ll go out to the golf course and I’ll show you how to play golf.” So we did, and I’m not athletically inclined at all so he showed me how to hold the club and hit the ball and stuff, and I couldn’t hit it worth anything. And I’d get in a sand trap and he’d say, “Now, I bet you can’t get out of that.”

And I’d say, “I bet I can.”

He’d say, “What do you want to bet?”

I said, “I don’t know.”

He said, “How about that brand new Skotch cooler you just bought?”

It was one of these round ones about two feet tall, and—and just round—just lovely; plaid. And I—I said, “Well—” I was stupid enough to say okay.

So I couldn’t get out of the sand trap for anything so he came—he won it, and I had just bought it, and that type of thing. But by the time I got up to about the sixth hole I was so tired I could hardly walk, and I—I’ve always had arthritis all my life, no big deal, but I thought everybody ached. And so, I said, “I don’t care who comes down the road but I’m going to walk out to where I see the road is, down there someplace. I’m going to walk out and I’m going to hitch a ride back to the nurses’ quarters because I can’t do this anymore.” And by gosh, I got a ride with Mary Lyons[?], [unclear] one of my nurse friends, and her boyfriend, and they picked me up and drove me home. As it turns out, their relative is down here at this church in some—in New Bern [North Carolina].

TS: Is that right?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Small world.

MM: Yeah, yeah. So he wasn’t—he knew I wasn’t any good at sports.

TS: Well, when did you—How soon—How long were you on base before you met him; Joe?

MM: Oh, just—I had been working one day—a Friday, I think it was—and got off at—I don’t remember what time I got off, but I got off and I was so tired I said, “If anything’s going on, wake me up. I’m going to go lie down.”

So I remember I had my supper and I laid down in the bed and after a while somebody called and said, “They just called from a BOQ, Bachelor Officer’s Quarters, and they said there’s a party over at such-and-such building,” probably a mile and half

away, and they said, “Anybody want to come to the party? There’s lots of room at the party, lots of food and everything.”

So the girl said, “Do you want to go?”

I said, “Sure.” So I got up and got dressed and went, and everybody’s having a great ole time there, so I didn’t—I—See, I didn’t drink; I still don’t drink. And I went to the party and I met this one guy, a psychologist or something, and he was talking. He said, “Would you like to go to the movie or something?”

I said, “I don’t know.”

And so—But he was talking about something, and then Joe comes in with another coup—bunch of guys and they’re having a great time laughing and talking. I’m sure they’d been drinking and I didn’t realize that. They had music, dancing, and they were [food?] , and everybody was getting—mixing and matching and so forth, and then Joe said, “Would you like to do something—” it wasn’t the movies, something else—“tomorrow?”

And I said, “Well, I’ve already got a date with So-and-so to do some other—movie or something,” the next day.

He said, “Go tell him you don’t want to do it.”

TS: [chuckling]

MM: So I said, “Okay.” [laughs] [unclear] cancel the other thing, and down at Camp Lejeune you could go to a different movie every day of the week and it cost you, like, twenty cents, because they had it all in the—the newspaper—the Lejeune newspaper. So we had a great time going to all the movies, and the Oldenthals—his boss’s wife and their five kids. We got along really good with them. We had a lot of good support from the people that he worked with and everything.

TS: Now, I thought you told me before we turned the tape on that the first time you met him he was doing something at that party, going from table to table.

MM: Oh, yes, this is—One Friday night they were at happy hour at the club and, as I say, I didn’t drink but he—he was—they—they were all—the ones that were in—he wasn’t in flight training right then but at some point [at] happy hour you see them all going like this, their hands—talking about turning the plane this way and that way and so forth.

TS: The pilots—

MM: The pilots. The pilots were—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —were all talking, using their hands to describe what they'd done in the—on the plane that day?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

MM: Yeah. But then the music changed and everything and all the guys—I wasn't doing it—they were up on—on the table—tops of the lovely long tables at the club and they were doing the bunny hop—one, two, three, kick; one, two, three, kick—and they had a wonderful time, and here's this poor guy that had been shot in the leg and couldn't go into—into training at the flight school because his leg was so bad and he was leading the troops. [both chuckle] But he—he comes from a town that the people are kind of like that up there. If you don't know the answer to something you'll make up the answer and it'll be perfectly okay with you. Since then we got to know the people in Lincoln, New Hampshire; that's how they acted.

TS: Well, now, did you enjoy your job, working as a nurse in the navy?

MM: Yes, I did, yeah, because there were, like, fifty-two guys on every wing; like, they had that many—they were all [unclear]. You had no privacy just about. I guess they had little curtains you could swing in between the beds for sleeping and so forth but this is—this is a hospital.

And this is funny. I—I—So I remember I was on the—This one time I was on the urology floor and I—I knew their names and I was giving them their medicines and I'd do a little health teaching if—if it was necessary, whatever, but my days were very full. I didn't know anybody personally and it didn't—wasn't interested in that, but at some point I went down to see Joe. This must have been after we were already married. I went down to see Joe down at Florida, he was down at flight training, and the flight didn't—something didn't work out as far as the flight. Somebody gave me a ride over to Cherry Point to get a flight and it didn't work out. I was bumped because I was the low man on the totem pole; I was bumped from the flight. So somehow or another I got a ride back by helicopter to right in front of the ward that I worked on, and it was daylight, and anytime any helicopter came in all the guys that could walk and come out, they'd go open

the door and look out and see who's there. Well, by gosh, I was the only one getting off the helicopter and they said, "Hey, she's back! Blah, blah, blah blah!"

[So we yelled?]. I said, "Hey!"

So it seemed like a very friendly place. Nobody was out of line; had any trouble. Except one time I was working on the psych floor and this big, heavy, large, black, enlisted man was in the jail part of the hospital, and it was a room about a third the size of this room, and there was a little window; it was about twelve inches on each side, and with bars. And I was walking by there and he knew I was out there, and he came—he got underneath the window and [makes noise indicating surprise] put his head up and he scared the daylights out of me. And he caused a lot of trouble in that—not that place that time but something—he attacked somebody that had come by and he—I don't—I don't think he hurt anybody but they put the tear gas out to control him and everything. I don't know the details on it but it was—I was really scared. I thought, "I don't want to work in that section," because there was another psychiatric part where the people weren't bad, but he was really damaged. I don't know what it was; shell shock or something. Yeah, but I liked what I did.

TS: What did you like best?

MM: The days went by very fast. I was busy the whole time. I don't think I worked on the second floor of that building at all. When I worked over to the OB/GYN, that's another whole building itself. So it was mostly to—just to see what they did on the different wards, and I knew how to do all the stuff that they had to. And they had frequent meetings; the nurse in charge of the whole—all the nurses. She would have meetings and tell us more little stuff, so there wasn't hardly anything that I had any—any problem with because you weren't—you were assigned to the only—one of the—the floor, fifty-two people in your care and so forth but they weren't all that awfully sick, and they had corpsmen to do the things—if they needed a special treatment that the corpsmen could do they would do that.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: They would do it then?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Was there anything that you disliked?

MM: Not really. The—The girls that work, I mean, in the nurses' quarters, they were all real friendly, real nice and—I'm trying to think of the different—When they had—had—sometimes they'd have a special party, it'd be somebody's birthday, and everybody'd get together and have a big—but that's the first time I was anyplace where there were ants on the table, and the upstairs—on the second floor where we lived—they had had a—had a kitchen and then a dining room, I guess, would be the [next?] room—[about?] this room, and they had a table there, and down south if you get a few ants in you're going to have a lot of ants in hot days and so forth, and maybe we didn't clean. I think we kept things—Things looked clean, but that's the first time I ever saw ants on the table and that scared me. I didn't [unclear].

TS: Oh, didn't—wasn't—Yeah, you're like, "I don't like that."

MM: Yeah, yeah. No, I—I liked it. It was interesting.

TS: Were your relations with your supervisors and your peers really good?

MM: There was a [unclear] Ms. Olsen[?], that worked in the di[etary department—MM clarified later]—she was in charge of the dieticians—of the dietary department and she was very nice to me. She had won an electric mixer someplace.

TS: Right.

MM: Or maybe she—she might have been given one as a gift from some supplier or something, and she said, "I think you would like this," so she gave me some recipes and she gave me the mixer.

TS: Oh, she did?

MM: Yeah.

TS: Wow, that was nice.

MM: Yeah. So they were—I didn't meet anybody that wasn't nice, and that was good, yeah.

TS: Did you get any special training for anything?

MM: I don't think so. I remember when I worked over in the post-partum, OB/GYN group and all these women had had the babies and they—they even had them make their own beds; the mothers that had just had the babies [unclear]. They had the baby Monday, they had to be up and make their own beds, change their own sheets, and all that stuff. I thought that was kind of bad. But this one doctor called me Bloody Mary. [chuckles]

TS: Why?

MM: I don't know. There was a lot of blood; pads and everything that post-partum women use.

TS: Oh.

MM: I think that was what—

TS: That could be.

MM: But he was—he thought it was—he thought it was funny; this guy, anyway.

TS: Well, what about—I didn't ask you a little bit about some of the things that were going on at the time. I did ask you a little bit about the Korean War, but overall, being in the Cold War with the—our Sputnik coming up in '57 and the Bay of Pigs [Invasion] actually is going to come up after you get out of—out of the service, I think. Isn't that right? Yeah.

MM: I didn't keep up with the news that much.

TS: No? You weren't—You didn't have any—

MM: I knew what was going on but I didn't know what it really meant.

TS: Okay.

MM: And I still don't. [both chuckle]

TS: Okay. Did you have an opinion about [President Dwight David "Ike"] Eisenhower, who was President at that time?

MM: Yes, I remember when he was President and we—this is 1963-4 that he was—Sorry, I remember when Kennedy was killed. We lived in D.C. at the time, and Eisenhower—I

remember about Eisenhower. I thought he was wonderful. But we lived in D.C. when he was—was—President Johnson took over after Kennedy was killed—

TS: Yes.

MM: —and my brother Bill came down to D.C. around that time; he stayed with us. In fact, the policeman from up in Lincoln, New Hampshire came down and stayed with us a few times just to visit Joe, because was always friendly with Joe up in New Hampshire. And when—when Joe McCaffrey was sixteen he went to the policeman's office up in New Hampshire and he said, "Hey Joe, what are you doing here?"

He said, "I came to get my driver's license."

He said, "Oh, Joe, you've been driving a huge lumber truck for the last two years. Didn't you have a license?"

He said, "No." He says, "Somebody says you have to get your driver's license when you're sixteen." And he was driving one of these great big trucks that has all these big trees in the back [unclear].

TS: Yes, sure.

MM: He never had an accident and they didn't have a—his folks didn't have a car, but his uncles had cars and they were—they were all not that much older than Joe, really, and so they taught him how to drive, and this, that, and the other. And then he and his—his cousin Jimmy were both altar boys all the way through school, and when they went to college they would come back on the weekend and be altar boys for church. But one time one of the priests said, "Joe," he says, "I need somebody to go down to Plymouth," twenty miles down south of Lincoln, "to go to the liquor store and get some wine for the altar." And he said, "You can use my car."

And Joe said, "Oh, good." So he and Jimmy got in the car and went down to Plymouth and they went to get the twelve bottles of wine, and Joe says to the guy—he said, "You know, you go to the bakeshop and you get twelve loaves of bread and they give you a free bread—free loaf of bread." He said, "Here we are, we're buying twelve bottles of wine for the church. You need to give us another one to be the thirteenth, no charge."

The guy said, "Oh, okay." So he gave it to Joe and Jimmy—

TS: Uh oh. [both laughing]

MM: —and they drank the bottle.

TS: I kind of sensed that was coming; they didn't go to the church.

MM: No, they drank it on the way home.

TS: Very, very clever. Well, at what point did you decide that—to leave the service? What happened?

MM: Well, I hadn't planned to leave the service and I hadn't—I didn't give any thought to it at all, and we got married December thirty-first [1954—MM clarified later] and we went back home to my folk—my town, and that—Of course, we were only there, like, a couple months ahead to have the engagement party, but then when Joe had flight training he never checked out of his BOQ room. He had two rooms at Camp Lejeune and when he checked out to go on flight training he didn't check out of one of them. So when he came back up to—at Christmas time, from Pensacola up to the nurses—Camp Lejeune, he stayed at his BOQ. And then he came up over Christmas time—Let's see. When we got home from the wedding Joe said, "We might as well get married." He said, "I don't want you running around down here and I'll be running around down there." He said, "I think we need to get married."

I said, "Okay," so I called my folks.

They said, "Okay."

So we—we went up to—had a lovely church wedding, nice—the lady that played the piano at the church also played the piano up at the next town's church and we went up there—because my mother belonged to the [American] Legion Auxiliary the ladies all helped make chicken salad, coleslaw, and all the food, and we brought up a dozen bottles of wine from the BO—the—

TS: PX?

MM: PX [Post Exchange], where you buy the booze, and brought that up. And so, everything was—and I wore my military dress. I never pictured myself in a veil and all that stuff. So we were married on the thirty-first. Of course, the church was already decorated for Christmas. Everything just kind of—Plus, my folks didn't have any money. My father had just retired and he didn't have—they never saved—they never had enough money to save really. But anyway, we had a nice wedding, and that was a Friday. We had to be down—down to Florida by Monday, so Sat—Friday after—

TS: For, like, a honeymoon or something or—

MM: No, our honeymoon was going down to Florida from Massachusetts.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, okay. Oh, for his flight training.

MM: Flight training, yeah, and he had already started the flight training and—but they hadn't really gotten into it all that much yet.

TS: Were you on leave or something for yourself?

MM: Yes, I had leave, yeah.

TS: Okay.

MM: So we went home—we went—we drove all the way down to Florida, and that's when I saw the guys doing the—they were talking about the planes—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: The planes.

MM: —in the air, yeah. And they said, "You guys were married New Year's Eve,"
And Joe said, "Yeah," he went to a party and woke up married.

TS: [chuckles]

MM: [We?] had this lovely wedding. And so, then I went back to—to Camp Lejeune and I—then I think I went back down about a month later and another time about a month later. Well, next thing you know, in March, I thought, "Oh, I haven't had my period," and I thought, "Hmm."

So I went to the doctor and he said, "I think you're pregnant."

And I said, "Oh, I hadn't even thought about that." I hadn't even thought about it. So—I can't remember the details about this, that, but I remember going to the doctor and being checked and so forth, and in those days you had to get out if you were expecting children. And so, I hadn't given a thought to any—You'd think it'd scared the daylights

out me and I wasn't worried about it. I always felt I could get a job, and so I got out April 5. I think I missed, like, two periods or something like that.

TS: So you had found out you were pregnant in March—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MM: I resigned.

TS: —and then you got out of the—

MM: Yes.

TS: Right away? So pretty quick.

MM: Yeah, and it wasn't my idea but that's what they said; "This is what you—"

TS: Would you rather been able to stay in?

MM: I would have. Well, yeah, I would have probably, but on the other hand I don't remember seeing anybody that was really very pregnant, getting ready to have the baby. I—I had never seen anybody around.

TS: But they do now, right?

MM: They do now, yeah.

TS: What do you think about that? Do you think that's okay?

MM: I can't picture being in the service when you are having your family, and if the mother—I can't particularly—like, if—if the mother and father are both in the service and they have a couple of kids, who's going to watch those children when the parents go overseas and so forth? I hadn't even thought about all that stuff. But nobody gave me any negative thoughts about anything, and it was—we'd been married, like, ten months when I had Michael. He was six pounds, twelve ounces, or something like that, so he wasn't too early, he wasn't too late. And Bill O'Rourke[?] was one of his good buddies, and Bill

was killed in a plane in Japan. He married a young enlisted girl. That's frowned upon, the officers and enlisted.

TS: Fraternization?

MM: Yeah. But he married this girl, we had went to the wedding, and then when she got pregnant a few months later or something, he wasn't around when—he died—he was—he flew into a mountain in Japan, [unclear].

TS: Was he a pilot?

MM: He was a pilot too; Bill was, yeah.

TS: I see.

MM: That was very sad, and I never kept up with her. She—She got out of the service and they just had the—the one child, so I never followed up on that; I don't remember where they came from.

TS: Do you think that your life is different because you joined the navy?

MM: I wouldn't have it any other way. We were busy the whole time—busy, busy—and we just had a lot of su—family support, and every place we lived we had caring people.

TS: Yes.

MM: I don't remember anybody wherever we lived—this is a funny thing. Halloween, I was thinking of it the other day, when we lived in D.C., one of the times we were right near Cameron Station and there was a place called Klein's [S. Klein Department Store]—it's a big store—but that was built while we were there. We lived in, like, one of five big buildings, we lived on the fourth floor, and I looked out and I could see a car with Massachusetts plates parked out in front of the building. I thought, "Who is that?"

Well, eventually I found out—I was sick one time and Joe had to do the wash, so he went downstairs to do the wash and here I am laying in the bed, I'm really sick, and he says, "Oh," he says, "I've got to change my clothes." He said, "There's a beautiful lady down in the di—in the wash room." He said—He said, "Oh," he says, "I can't wear these old Chinos and t-shirt." He said, "I'm going to get dressed."

And I said, "Ah," so [I] paid no attention.

So then I—The next day I'm laying out on the sofa in the living room, the kids had gone off to school, and he'd gone off to work, knock on the door and it's this lady. She's nice looking but just average. She said, "I saw your husband last night down in the laundry room and he said you were so sick." She—So she brought me some hand lotion and some perfume or something, and she—was when bouffant hairdos were all popular and her—she—her hair looked lovely.

And she—I said—I said, "He came back and told me," blah, blah.

She said, "Oh," she said, "yeah, I had my—my night eye—eyes on." She—She had eyeliner and all this stuff, and false eyelashes and stuff. She said, "I guess that's what he was talking about." Well, she was the one from Massachusetts.

TS: Oh, I see.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MM: And she's from my same hometown as Canton.

TS: Is that right?

MM: Yeah.

TS: It's a small world. [unclear]

MM: Isn't that something? Small world. And we went on vacation one time, they had the two little girls and we had the kids; our kids were a little bit older. But Pammy[?] was the older one and she couldn't quite reach the tel—the—the number in the elevator of the floor that they lived on—so she carried a—a wooden spatula with her everywhere that she went so that when she got on the elevator she could press three. [both chuckle]

TS: Well, we talked about most of this off—off tape, but I just want to make sure that we mention that Joe stayed in—was career in the—He was a Marine, right; Marine Corps?

MM: Yes.

TS: And so, you followed him around to how many places? Seventeen?

MM: We moved fourteen times.

TS: Fourteen, okay.

MM: Yeah, fourteen times we moved whole households full of stuff; fourteen times in twenty years, yeah.

TS: Would you recommend the service to young people today? Were any of your—your kids in the service?

MM: Michael was in the navy, but he was an enlisted man in the [U.S.] Navy, in submarines, and Patty, Marine Corps, and Terry, in—she was going to go in the service, she was already a nurse, and she talked—some nurse from Florida called her up and talked to her and Terry says, “I don’t [unclear]. I don’t want to talk to somebody like—I don’t work—want to work for somebody like that. I didn’t like her—her—way she was talking or her mannerisms or anything.” She said, “So I’m going to cancel my request to go in the service.”

TS: Oh, so she was getting ready to go and that’s—that kind of changed her—

MM: Yeah, yeah.

TS: What about your daughter Patty? She retired from the Marine Corps also, right?

MM: She—She was in the regulars—She graduated from Chapel Hill but she used to run with the kids of the ROTC. She used to run with them and so forth and they said, “Why don’t you join the Reserves or something so [unclear] you’ll be able to go in early—in the service.”

And she said, “Well, I hadn’t thought about that.”

They said, “Yeah.” So when she graduated she was already accepted and in that, and so she stayed in the regulars for a period of time.

TS: Okay.

MM: Yeah. And then she met Jeff, who had been married before and had already gotten a divorce. When he met his wife she—I think he was going to Duke [University] or someplace here in North Carolina. He was really from Oregon to begin with. And she was going to college there, too, so they got married, and then when it was time for her—for them to go as a couple—move on orders—she didn’t want to do that and

she—she said, “I’m not going to move place to place to place with you,” and so she didn’t. She never moved to be in the same area that he was in.

TS: Oh, is that right?

MM: Yeah. So at some point—this is before Patty even met him—they got divorced, but she—by this time she’s had two children and—this is funny—the Thanksgiving after Patty and Jeff were married the girls—by this time the girls were about eight and ten, something like that, they had an uncle—Maria was his first wife’s name—his mother’s name was Mary Katherine, his first wife was Maria something, and Patty is Mary Patricia, so they’ve got all these Marys, and he was not a Catholic but he was born on December [8th—MM corrected later], Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and he loves the Blessed Mother.

But anyway, Eric was the—Maria’s brother, stationed in the Marine Corps down at Cherry Point at the time that they were all going to be here for Thanksgiving, so when I found that out I said, “Would you like to invite Eric up for—for Thanksgiving, because he’ll be here and you don’t see him very often?”

The kids said, “Oh, yeah, that’d be nice.”

So we had him up and we had a very nice Thanksgiving and so forth, and that changed the whole way that Maria acted toward Patty. Now, Patty didn’t break up the marriage. They were long broken up before Patty came into the picture, and so—because we were so nice to Eric, and also Maria’s mother who had been married about seven times, she thought that was a very nice thing to do for Eric. I’ve never seen Eric since then or anything, but when these two girls got married within the last ten years—Jeff doesn’t ever want to see Maria again so he doesn’t go to the weddings that the girls have or christenings or anything like that.

But they were up in Ken—Tennessee, I think they live—Kentucky, they live now, and—but when they had the wedding Patty went to the wedding and they—you know how they have the bride’s mother sit down towards the front of the section? Pat—They brought Maria down and she sat there, and then they came back and they got Patty, come down, sat there, and this, that, and the other. The wedding was in a nice church, and so forth, and then when it was over they have the mother of the bride and the stepmother of the bride come out and walk back out. So the girls stand up and Maria looks at Patty, Patty looks at Maria, and Maria puts her hand in Patty—in Patty’s arm and they walk up arm in arm out of the church.

TS: Nice.

MM: Wasn’t that nice?

TS: Yeah.

MM: Yeah. So they some good relationship there.

TS: Well, would you—Is there any job do you think that women should not be able to do in the military?

MM: I don't think they should fight; kill people. When Patty was up at [United States Marine Corps Base] Quantico [Virginia] in OCS [Officer Candidate School], it was hot, hot weather and she got sunstroke from crawling in the mud, walking up the walls and grabbing the—the—the rope and going up and so forth. So she was able to do all that but it was so hot that she got sunstroke and she was put in the hospital for a couple of days, and IVs and stuff like that.

TS: Yes.

MM: And I—I mean, that's part of the whole thing. They should have to do that but I can't picture women in battle; myself, I just can't picture—I can see that they might have a desk job or something but I don't see that they should have to crawl around in the mud and do that.

TS: Yeah.

MM: What do you think about that?

TS: Oh, I—That's for another discussion we can have, but—

MM: Yeah, I don't think so.

TS: Well, the military's changed a lot for women since the 1950s.

MM: Yes.

TS: Now they can have a—be pregnant and stay in.

MM: Yes.

TS: And sometimes during the period you were in, a little bit earlier, they had to get out even if they got married, sometimes.

MM: Really? Did they? Yeah.

TS: So it's—it's changed, and it's changed in the civilian work world, too, right?

MM: Yes. Yeah, talking about the nursing, when I went different places and I wanted to work certain hours they said, "No, you can't do that. You just don't do that."

TS: Yeah, that's right.

MM: Now they do.

TS: Yeah. Let me ask you what patriotism means to you.

MM: It means we love our country, we want to do the best for our country and have the country do the best for us. And political stuff is just for the birds right now. Just—I watch Fox News a lot and I—I don't like the Democrats. I mean, all—I've never paid much attention to politics, but when I see what—And of course, different people, there's some goods in both but—But I don't get deep into stuff like that. It doesn't—I sort of go along with whatever, but if something is—I did a—What is this other group that—they go along with Republicans?—Tea Party people. I went to a Tea Party thing down here in New Bern. My friend Carol from Pennsylvania and her husband were down there and they said, "Do you want to come?"

So I said, "Yeah." So over at Union Point [Park], which you could probably see when you go around to see New Bern, it's near the water.

TS: Okay.

MM: A gazebo there and everything. We went to it and it was very nice, and I saw several men that had been in the service years before and so forth and—carrying flags and things like that. So at some point something happened where people said, "Any—Anybody that's been in the service want to salute anybody else that's in the service?"

So I thought, "Sure, I know how to salute," so I did this and I thought that was pretty good—what they said was—I thought that was pretty good. But you don't hear so much about them right now; the Tea—

TS: The Tea Party?

MM: —Party. I don't get deep into those things. I'm kind of—I guess I—I'm not outspoken but—because I don't think I've got the story straight on a lot of the stuff. I just do the best I can for where I'm at.

TS: Well, if you had to do it all over again would you sign up and walk in that navy station and—

MM: I probably would. I don't have any—I remember that Joe, when he started feeling—he was really sick the last ten years of his life and he—he would be up here, [because it was the last thirty years?], and had had his own—his own golf cart; laid back. We used to play golf every day. Even when he worked at the high school in Havelock, he would go off, he'd tell Mr. Gainey, the principal, he said, "Well, I'll see you a little later."

He says, "Where you going?"

He says, "I'm going to play golf," and they thought he was kidding. And so—

TS: But he wasn't, huh?

MM: He wasn't kidding. And the secretary said, "I don't know where—he said he's going to play golf."

Mr. Gainey says, "Well, why don't you just sort of watch out and see what he does."

And also, during the summer when there's no school Joe would—we lived about two miles—we lived in Havelock about two miles from school, he would go up every day during the summer when there's no school, he'd do the scheduling, he'd do this, that, and the other, all the things that he needed to do so when school started it's all done; [unclear] and the other thing. And so, he—he had—he was able to do the way he wanted to in most cases, and he wasn't gypping anybody out of—out of anything. But when this one finally—After the secretaries told Mr. Gainey what his hours were, and the janitor and everything, they said—Gainey came in, he said, "Look, Joe," he said, "Anytime you want to take any time off to go play golf or do anything," he said, "You go ahead and do it." He said, "We owe you so much time for all the time you spent extra. You'll never be able to use it up." So that was pretty nice.

And what was the other thing? I forget the generals—there was a general at Cherry Point that Joe used to know when he was a younger man, and this man had a son who was in high school at Cherry Point when Joe was a counselor down there, and the teacher called Joe in the office and said, "Would you please come down and see what this kid Drew—was the kid's first name—He's got a red patch right on his crotch—that he sewed a red patch of cloth on his crotch."

And Joe goes down and he sees just where the kid is and he said—So the guy comes up. He said, “You come to my office.” So he came to his office. He said, “You know—He said, “Why—Why have you got that on there?”

He said, “My father said it’s okay.”

He said, “You mean your father said it was okay for you to wear—do that to your trousers and come to school?”

He said, “Oh, yeah.”

He said, “Oh,” he said, “Okay,” he said, “I’ll be—he said, “I’m going to take you for a little ride.” So Joe takes Drew in his car—Joe’s car—to the base headquarters and goes right in, and Joe used to work at headquarters and he knew this kid’s father very well. And he said to the secretary—he said, “I want to go upstairs to [unclear].” He said—

She said, “The general’s in a meeting.”

He said, “I don’t care.” He said, “I know where the meeting’s at.” He said—and he had the kid with him.

She says, “Okay, but the meeting is a—is all big wheels.”

He said, “I don’t care.” So he goes on in, knocks on the door, goes in.

And the general says, “Joe, what are you here—” and he said, “Drew, what are you here for?”

Joe brings the kid up and he says, “Did you let him come out of the house with this red patch on the crotch of his pants?”

And the father said, “No.”

And he said, “Well, he said you did.”

He said, “I’ll take care of this, Joe.”

And so, Joe said, “I’m going to leave him here and I’ll expect to see you down at school in about twenty minutes.”

So Joe leaves and goes down to school, and when he gets back—got down to school Mr. Gainey says, “Where is—Where’d you take the kid off to?”

And he says—He said, “You’ll see. The general’s car’s going to come pulling up here with all the flags on the car,” like the general’s cars have, “and you’re going to see.” So they’re all looking out the window and here he comes in, and the kid’s all dressed up in his Sunday best suit, shirt and tie and everything. [chuckles]

And the general says, “This—This’ll never happen,” and I think that kid is a general now.

TS: Is that right? [chuckles]

MM: Yeah, something like that.

TS: Well, that's a good story.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Well, that sounds like—unless you have anything else you want to add, that sounds like a good one to end on.

MM: Yeah.

TS: You think?

MM: Yes; yeah.

TS: Okay.

MM: Yeah, I wouldn't do anything different. I—It was good. You never know—I wasn't in warfare with it, I didn't do anything wrong in the military as far as nursing is concerned, and I think they treated me right and I treated them right.

TS: Yeah?

MM: And I wouldn't have changed—I never—I would never have plan—thought of—my life would have been like this.

TS: Right.

MM: But it was fine.

TS: But it was, after meeting Joe and stuff.

MM: Yeah.

TS: Well, thanks so much, Mary. It's been a pleasure talking with you.

MM: You're welcome. I wanted to show you this picture.

TS: Okay, let me go ahead and turn the tape off first.

[End of Interview]