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Velva Maye

Rosie the Riveter

World War II American Home Front Oral History Project

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Interviews conducted by
Robin Li
in 2012

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Velva Maye

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Interview 1: April 18, 2012

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Li: This is Robin Li, speaking with Velva Maye in Seattle, Washington, April 18, 2012, as part of the Rosie the Riveter National Home Front oral history project. Thank you for sitting down with me today. I'm really looking forward to speaking with you. For the purposes of the transcript record, could you tell me your full name, where and when you were born?

01-00:00:29

Maye: Oh. Well, Velva Maye. The middle name is M-A-E. My maiden name was Fleming, F-L-E-M-I-N-G, and my married name is Maye, M-A-Y-E.

Li: So you became Velva Mae Maye.

01-00:00:54

Maye: Yeah, yeah. That's the way it is.

Li: Where and when were you born?

01-00:01:01

Maye: July 11, 1924.

Li: Was that in North Dakota?

01-00:01:09

Maye: Ellendale, North Dakota.

Li: Ellendale.

01-00:01:12

Maye: My father built the most modern farm in North Dakota, in 1918. What he did is he drilled an artesian well, and then he built the house around it, round the well, and he ran electricity out from town, out from Ellendale, North Dakota, two miles west, to our farm. So we had electricity and running water. Of course, he had a pump for the artesian well. That was unheard of in those days.

Li: What prompted him to do that? What motivated him?

01-00:02:10

Maye: Well, he was just handy. Beside a farmer, he was a carpenter. So we had a tile kitchen floor, a tile bathroom, in 1918. This is before I was born. We had electricity in all of our buildings. The chicken house was a long, three-room chicken house, and the garage that held the cars, it was two rooms because one room my dad used as a carpenter room. The barn had electricity, and the hog house had electricity. So when I came along, I really had a wonderful time on the farm, because I rode horseback. How many people today can say that they rode horseback to school for four years? [audiofile skips]

Li: So was your father a pig farmer? Was his farm a pig farm?

01-00:03:45

Maye: Oh, no, wheat farm.

Li: Had your father's family been doing that for a while?

01-00:03:54

Maye: Oh, yes. Yes. Of course, families were bigger in those days. There were eight in my dad's family; there were eight in my mother's family. My grandfather, my dad's father, was killed by a run-away team of horses, in 1902. My father, he was the oldest one in the family, and so he sort of became the father, helped his mother raise the rest of the kids. So it progressed from there.

Li: Were both of your parents from North Dakota originally, then?

01-00:04:54

Maye: No. My dad was a full-blooded Scotchman. In fact, his mother made him wear kilts to school the first year. He never really got over that.

Li: So your grandparents immigrated from Scotland?

01-00:05:11

Maye: My mother was English. Well, actually, we had mother's relatives come over on the Mayflower. So there's a lot of history on my mother's side of the family.

Li: How did your parents meet, do you know?

01-00:05:38

Maye: They met in Ellendale. I guess my mother's family moved to Ellendale, and somehow my dad took up with my mother. She was a homemaker, first class. Kept everything neat and scrubbed, clean.

Li: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

01-00:06:13

Maye: I had two brothers. Well, I had a sister that died when she was two years old. Her name was Velma My mother was reading the paper one day and ran across Velva, North Dakota, up by Minot. She checked it out and the name, in Latin, means soft and smooth. Eric Severeid—and that's before your time, probably—he was a national, international, actually, journalist. He was born in Velva, North Dakota, and he got his start in Velva, North Dakota. The Mother of the Year for the United States, in 1969, was from Velva, North Dakota.

Li: So she chose your name because she liked the word?

01-00:07:15

Maye:

Yes. I've only met one other person with that name. She was a clerk at Nordstrom's, over here at Northgate Mall. She says, "Oh, we have the same names." I says, "Well, how did you come about your name?" She said her dad's name was V-E-L-T-A, and her mother changed the T to a V. I says, "Well, where are you from?" She was from Yugoslavia. She didn't know about Velva, North Dakota. So I always say the town is named after me. Anyhow, I'm named after it.

Li:

So where were you in the birth order? Were you the oldest?

01-00:08:09

Maye:

Oh, I was the youngest.

Li:

The youngest? So two boys and then you?

01-00:08:13

Maye:

My sister was in between and she died in 1918 of cholera and famine, they called it in those days.

Li:

What is that?

01-00:08:25

Maye:

It was probably from drinking water, impure water. It was before they moved to the farm. Or it was when they were first married.

Li:

How far was school from your house?

01-00:08:46

Maye:

Two miles.

Li:

Did you enjoy school?

01-00:08:52

Maye:

Oh, yes! I was the smartest one in class, because there was only another boy in the class. In those days, there were, let's see, four grades in one room and then four grades in the other room. So you learned advanced schooling, because if you listened to what they taught in earlier grades, that's the way—

Li:

How long were you in North Dakota for?

01-00:09:43

Maye:

I was eleven years old when we left.

Li:

Do you have memories of the Great Depression?

01-00:09:51

Maye:

Oh, yes! Oh, yes.

Li:

Because that started when you were in North Dakota still, then.

01-00:09:56

Maye: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Li: Can you share with me how—

01-00:09:59

Maye: Oh, yes. Well, my mother had asthma. During the Depression, we had nothing but wind and dirt; I say, soil, because we didn't have a lot of trees. So the doctor said, hey, she couldn't live a long life if she stayed in North Dakota, because it was just too dusty and dirty. So we started west. Coming west, I was left at Nazarene ministers' homes and different places because my folks were looking for work. Ritzville, Washington; Salem, Oregon; Richland, Washington. Folks cut asparagus there in Richland. Moscow, Idaho; and Spokane; and Kellogg, Idaho.

Li: So you said they would leave you with ministers, while they went looking for work?

01-00:11:44

Maye: Well, for schooling.

Li: Because they would be traveling around.

01-00:11:49

Maye: Yes.

Li: Sort of in the closest town nearby, or where would they—?

01-00:11:56

Maye: Well, sometimes. Sometimes they were far away. The first year of high school, I was at Moscow, Idaho, and I was left with a family that the girl had polio. She was in college, but she couldn't turn the pages of her book and what have you, so I was her assistant, helping her study and so on and so forth, taking care of her. My folks were up in Spokane.

Li: Well, that's a lot for a child to handle.

01-00:12:56

Maye: Oh, yes!

Li: Were your brothers with you?

01-00:13:01

Maye: No. My youngest brother is ten years older than I, and they're both gone. Then my sister Velma was in between my youngest brother and myself.

Li: So you were on your own, then, during this time.

01-00:13:20

Maye: Yes.

Li: Would you write letters back and forth with your parents?

01-00:13:24

Maye: No. No.

Li: Oh, my goodness. That's a lot for a child.

01-00:13:29

Maye: Yeah.

Li: Were those hard years, then? Do you remember those being hard years?

01-00:13:34

Maye: Oh, I was an optimistic kid, so I didn't mind. I was helping someone.

Li: So can you tell me some of the things that you saw as you were traveling west with your family?

01-00:13:57

Maye: Oh, my dad built our trailer house, and my mother loaded everything—all of her canned goods. She canned everything. She canned meat, and she canned vegetables and everything. So he built two floors, you might say, in the trailer house, and she loaded all of her canned stuff on the floor, the bottom floor. So we started west. Actually, Ritzville, Washington was the first stop. My family got me a little dog, a small dog. And it got in a fight with the neighbor dog, and the neighbor killed it. So that was a traumatic ordeal for me.

Li: Were there a lot of other families kind of on the road at that time?

01-00:15:18

Maye: Oh, yes.

Li: From the Midwest, from farming families?

01-00:15:20

Maye: Yeah.

Li: Would you sort of park near each other and play with the kids?

01-00:15:31

Maye: Oh, yes. Let's see. At Moscow, Idaho, I got scars riding a bicycle, riding someone on the bicycle and running into gravel and taking a spill. Different things like that. I was always protected. I never got involved with, oh, a lot of kids. And when I was on the farm, I was by myself, sort of. On horseback, really.

Li: It sounds like you might've been a little bit isolated; but do you remember, before you left the farm, seeing the effects of the Great Depression in your town, in Ellendale?

01-00:16:33

Maye:

Oh, yes. Actually, we went to church every weekend. A family of five girls lived south of Ellendale, the Hall family. They'd come over to my place, and they'd think they were in a castle or a mansion or something because they had outside toilets and so forth, and they didn't have electricity and things like that. I'd go over there and we had to climb up the wall to the attic to sleep, and on the floor. Things like that. I've been through a lot. A lot of depressions.

Li:

Do you think it was hard for your parents to leave that house on the farm?

01-00:18:58

Maye:

Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Because my dad had a Hart Parr—they called it a Hart Parr tractor, in those days—and he would do harvesting for other farmers.

Li:

Did you work on the farm at all?

01-00:18:27

Maye:

My dad was going to teach me how to milk one day. Of course, my brothers, they always fought over the horses and what cows they would milk and what have you, and I decided that that wasn't for me. So when my father sat me down to teach me how to milk a cow, he sat in front of me, milking a cow. He had big pockets on his overalls, and so I'd hit his pockets and every place else but the pail. I'll never forget that. He was so unhappy with me. He never asked me to milk a cow again. He gave up. He decided that, hey, I was going to do my own thing. Wasn't going to learn to milk a cow.

Li:

Well, did you have an idea, when you were growing up, about what you wanted to do when you were older?

01-00:19:45

Maye:

Oh, no.

Li:

No?

01-00:19:46

Maye:

No. No, I had no idea.

Li:

Were your parents political at all? Did they talk about politics at home?

01-00:19:53

Maye:

My dad ran for representative of North Dakota, and he lost by about fifty votes. But I didn't get involved with politics.

Li:

Did they subscribe to any newspapers that you remember?

01-00:20:14

Maye:

Oh, the phone line, the phone that we had, everybody was on it. You heard the rings of other phones and so forth. Actually, an electrician was killed in our yard, right in front of me. We had an electric storm, and it hit the transformer

down at the road. Our house sat back away from the road. Of course, it was a gravel road in those days. So he went up to fix the telephone, and he carried a telephone line in his waistline. It happened that the telephone line touched the electric lines and electrocuted him. My oldest brother, he was smart. He didn't touch the guy. Of course, I ran. I was a few feet from where he fell, and I ran to my brother to tell him, and he got the gun and shot the wires.

Li: Smart.

01-00:22:02

Maye: Before he touched him.

Li: Wow.

01-00:22:05

Maye: So that was a smart thing for him to do. It happened that the electrician's daughter was on the telephone in town, in Ellendale, and she got the news.

Li: What were your brothers' names?

01-00:22:33

Maye: Lyle and Mervin. They were different.

Li: Yeah?

01-00:22:40

Maye: Flemings, yeah.

Li: So did they leave the farm, then, before you went west?

01-00:22:50

Maye: Yes, yes. My oldest brother, he came west. That was a story. He and—let's see—three other guys, for like five dollars, bought a car and fixed it up and came west with it.

Li: This is before you and your parents did?

01-00:23:27

Maye: Yes. My other brother, he got married young and he got his own farm. He managed. In fact, his son is over at Richland. He was a scientist for Hanford.

Li: It seems like most young men would've left town at that time, to look for work.

01-00:24:16

Maye: Yes.

Li: So it must've been unusual for him to stay and stay farming.

01-00:24:20

Maye: Right. Right.

Li: So your mother was a homemaker; she never worked outside the home?

01-00:24:27

Maye: No. No. She was a good cook, an excellent housekeeper. She tried every way to get me to sew. I had more clothes than ten kids should've had. They were made out of silk and pongee. Always pants to match. I always dressed in a dress. My mother wouldn't buy me overalls. I talked my dad into buying overalls for me once, when I was in town, and my mother couldn't get them off of me. Oh, dear. So she made me some shirts to—she was an excellent seamstress, besides being a good cook and keeping a clean house. She always was cleaning house. She liked to sew. She tried to teach me to sew and I didn't have the patience. Oh, dear. My thread would knot. Heaven's sakes. She'd try all sorts of things.

Li: Did she have aspirations for you? Would she talk to you about what she wanted for you?

01-00:25:59

Maye: No.

Li: No?

01-00:26:00

Maye: No. No. Left it up to me.

Li: So you did your first year of high school in Moscow, you said?

01-00:26:13

Maye: Moscow, Idaho.

Li: Okay. And then where did you go from there?

01-00:26:17

Maye: Lewis and Clark, in Spokane. Then to Kellogg, Idaho. I spent the whole year, freshman year, at Moscow, Idaho, and then I changed schools twice during my sophomore and junior years. So I went to Lewis and Clark, Spokane; and then Kellogg, Idaho; and then back to Millwood, in Opportunity, by Spokane there. Then I spent my senior year in Queen Anne, Seattle, Washington.

Li: So had your parents come to Seattle by that point? Is that why you came?

01-00:27:06

Maye: Yes.

Li: Okay. What were they doing then?

01-00:27:10

Maye: My dad worked for Todd Shipyards.

Li: What year was this, that you came to Seattle?

01-00:27:23

Maye: 1941.

Li: 1941. For your senior year of high school?

01-00:27:28

Maye: Yeah. We were driving across the Aurora Bridge, from church—it was Sunday—when Pearl Harbor was bombed. We had a radio in our car, which was unusual, to have radios in cars, and heard the news. So I know exactly where I was when I heard the news that Pearl Harbor was bombed.

Li: Had your family been following the war in the Pacific, Japan's invasion of China? Was there an awareness of the threat of potential Japanese invasion?

01-00:28:11

Maye: Well, just radio.

Li: Just the radio?

01-00:29:15

Maye: Yes.

Li: But was it shocking? When you heard the news, did it seem—

01-00:28:21

Maye: Well, yes. The world was small, back in those days. The world was small, because you didn't have the airplanes and people didn't travel. Usually, families were raised right around where they were born. So the world was a lot smaller. So you'd hear about what was going on overseas, via the radio.

Li: Did it seem really far away, kind of removed?

01-00:29:07

Maye: Yes.

Li: Did your brothers enlist?

01-00:29:15

Maye: No. My oldest brother worked at Boeing, and my youngest brother, he came west, and he was first mechanic—welding mechanic—at Kenworth Motor Truck. They built trucks for the Army and what have you.

Li: So they both were involved in war industry? When the war broke out, they were working?

01-00:29:58

Maye: Yes. Because they had families, that kept them tied to their job.

Li: So you graduated from high school in 1942, is that right?

01-00:30:20

Maye: Yes. I took shorthand. I had a teacher by the name of Rausch. He was a German. He was built like a German; he was stout and he had a thick neck. I'll never forget him. But he was a terrible teacher. If a student didn't have their lesson right, he'd yell at them. He would just talk them down, talk down to them. Heaven's sakes. He would embarrass them. I always was scared of him. I was scared to death of him. But I'd stay up till one, two o'clock in the morning, to make sure that I had my shorthand right and that I could type it and not make a mistake. I got straight A from him. So one day, my homeroom teacher said, "Mr. Rausch wants to talk to you." I thought, "What in the world have I done wrong now?" I was scared to death, because I worked at the library, in my sixth period, and I always took off down the hill to the library, which was downtown, where the present library is, two libraries ago. Gee. Well, anyway, I went in to see Mr. Rausch and I says, "Well, you wanted to talk to me?" He says, "Yes." He says, "Are you going to college?" I said, "No." I says, "I'm working at the library, and my folks can't afford to send me to college." He says, "Well, I'm writing a letter to the personnel manager at Boeing." He says, "When you turn eighteen, you take this down there, and they'll give you a job." So I kept the letter, and that's the way it happened.

Li: Really?

01-00:33:05

Maye: He must've had a pull. I don't know this, but he must've had a pull with some of the Boeing people, because I was interviewed to take a place of a woman that was joining the Navy, to see the world. She never got out of the United States. Hutchinson was her name. Anyway, she had two people working for her, and I was interviewed for her job. Well, I wasn't dry behind the ears, you might say. So I just went in there as a buddy. I had no experience being a supervisor. Anyway, the main thing is, whatever I did, I tried to do right and do a good job. So I learned her job.

It wasn't probably two months or three months—it was probably only two months—I was on her job a short time and had these two people working for me. One was on swing shift and one was on the days. Boeing needed a buyer. So they selected me as a buyer. There were four of us women—none of us were married—that bought the standard parts for the B-17 production line, at Boeing. Heaven's sakes. For the four women buying parts, it was a new experience. Two of the women were twins, and they were spiffy dressers. Oh, I admired their suits. They always came to work in glamorous suits. So I always looked at how they were dressed, because they were spiffy dressers. And then Grace, she stayed on after the war, whereas the two twins, they disappeared. They quit Boeing and went on. But Grace stayed on at Boeing's

purchasing department, and then she got married and I got married. So we stayed on at Boeing.

I quit Boeing after I got married, because my husband had an auto rebuild over on 87th and Greenwood. It's not there anymore. He had a service station at 103rd and Greenwood and then an auto rebuild down at 87th and Greenwood, and that building is not there anymore. So anyway, I quit Boeing. Because I'd watched my brothers, with their mechanics and what have you, and fixing machines and doing mechanical things. I was actually a better service station attendant than my husband was. I could repair tires. In those days, we had rubber tubes we had to patch and replace. And I lubed cars and I kept the station clean. I'll never forget; one day a guy came in for a lube job. I'm lubing his car and then he spit on my floor. I says, "Hey, you don't spit on the floor." He says, "Well, this is not your home." I said, "Well, yes, but I keep it clean." So anyway, we had quite an argument about it. I says, "Just don't come back here." So I never saw him again. But anyway. Gas was nineteen cents a gallon.

Li: What year is this, that you left Boeing and went to the garage?

01-00:39:15

Maye: Let's see. Late forties. Late forties.

Li: What year did you get married, do you remember?

01-00:39:35

Maye: Oh, '46. So it was '47. Come to think of it, it was '47 that I quit working for Boeing.

Li: So you were at Boeing from '42 to '47?

01-00:39:45

Maye: Yes. It has been seventy years since I started to work at Boeing. I worked five years during the war. Then I got married and quit Boeing to work in the service station for six years. Then I went back to Boeing for a little over thirty-five years. I worked for Boeing Company for a little over forty years altogether.

Li: How did you meet your husband?

01-00:39:52

Maye: Through a friend. Yeah. He was the only one I ever went with.

Li: Oh, wow.

01-00:40:04

Maye: And ended up, married him.

Li: Was he in the service?

01-00:40:09

Maye: His father was Swedish. He worked all during the war, as a seamstress, making suits for, oh, Kopenstein or—he was never out of work.

Li: This is your father-in-law?

01-00:40:32

Maye: Yes. What he did in Sweden is he'd go around to farmers' places and make them suits. He was fantastic. But he was a terrific gardener. Oh, man. He grew vegetables and flowers. He was a terrific gardener.

Li: What did your husband do during the war? This is, I guess, before you met him.

01-00:41:03

Maye: Yes. Well, he was in the war, as an Army sergeant, supply sergeant, in the Air Force. They didn't call it Air Force in those days, though.

Li: The Army Air Corps?

01-00:41:23

Maye: Yeah. He flew in airplanes and took supplies.

Li: For the Army?

01-00:41:33

Maye: For the Army, different places. In Alaska. His plane went down in Kenai Peninsula. Was it Kenai Peninsula? Yeah. The islands that go out.

Li: Oh, the Aleutian chain?

01-00:41:54

Maye: Yes, Aleutian chain. Yeah. His plane went down and only two of them survived, and he was one of them.

Li: Was he flying?

01-00:42:03

Maye: Yes.

Li: What kind of planes were they, do you know?

01-00:42:06

Maye: No. No. I don't know.

Li: How did he survive?

01-00:42:13

Maye: Well, they were picked up. He wouldn't talk about it. He was one that should have had medical treatment after he got out of the service, and he didn't. He

would never travel. He wouldn't go to visit anyone. But he could sell you a dead cat and tell you you'd make money on it, and you would buy it. He had a terrific, terrific personality. He would be a friend with everyone. So he was a terrific salesman. Anyway, it was a busy time.

Li: How long did you know him before you got married?

01-00:43:33

Maye: Oh, probably six months.

Li: So you were working at Boeing when you met him?

01-00:43:44

Maye: Yes.

Li: So what was your first job at Boeing, when you were hired right out of high school? Were you doing secretarial work? Or what was that first job?

01-00:43:55

Maye: Oh, no. No.

Li: Before you were a buyer.

01-00:44:00

Maye: No, I was typing letters. Acknowledgment. Actually, Hutchinson, her title was Acknowledgment. Acknowledgment follow-up.

Li: And that's what you did?

01-00:44:19

Maye: Yeah. See, all the purchase orders at Boeing had to have acknowledgment from the vendors. Which was a new rule, you might say, because the government insisted that all purchase orders be acknowledged by vendors. So I was follow-up. It was typing letters to vendors, saying that they hadn't acknowledged or something. It was typing.

Li: So why did they pick you to be a buyer? Do you know what it was about your work?

01-00:45:08

Maye: I don't know. Well, I was good at typing and I was good at—well, whatever I did, I made darn sure that I did it right. I guess because I was in the acknowledgment area, that they figured—well, I was curious, so I'd always talk to the buyers, different buyers, that maybe their purchase order hadn't been acknowledged or something. So by talking to them, I guess—. Whatever.

Li: So why were the buyers all women, do you know?

01-00:46:05

Maye: Well, there were just four of us, standard buyers. Now, there were lots of buyers. Lots of buyers. Buyers for engines, buyers for outside production, buyers for raw material. So there were four of us women that bought standard parts. The standard parts, I mean rivets and nuts and bolts and things like that.

Li: All for the B-17?

01-00:46:36

Maye: All for the B-17's production line.

Li: So these were wartime jobs that only existed because—

01-00:46:41

Maye: Oh, yes. I knew the factory and where all the SRA stores were.

Li: So these weren't jobs that men had had before the war; these jobs didn't exist before the war, because it was specifically for the B-17 that you were buying.

01-00:47:01

Maye: Yes. Well, someone had to buy parts. You don't build things without buying the parts.

Li: But for the B-17. That production was during the war.

01-00:47:18

Maye: Yes. Well, we put out a plane just about every hour. I think we reached the production line of putting out planes just about every hour.

Li: A plane every hour.

01-00:47:37

Maye: Mm-hm.

Li: That's amazing. Just from the Seattle factory or from the—

01-00:47:40

Maye: Yes. [Narrator addendum: Boeing produced 6,981 B-17 airplanes, Vega 2,750 and Douglas 3,000 airplanes. All the B-17 Blueprints were designed and made in Seattle and used by two California companies.]

Li: Oh, my goodness. Because there were B-17 factories in California.

01-00:47:44

Maye: I'll never forget, one day we were shut down, almost, the factory was shut down, because an airplane wing was missing. The airplane wings came off of the balcony, down to the production line, and were attached on the production line. They couldn't find this wing. So they found it half a day later behind something. Someone had stored it wrong, and they found it behind something.

Oh, I'll never forget. It was terrible. Everybody knew about it, because the production line was shut down.

Li: So were you buying parts for B-17s that were built in Boeing factories in lots of different places, or just for the Seattle factory?

01-00:49:08

Maye: Oh, just for the Seattle factory. Oh, yes. The parts would come in across the street, north end, and flow through, out to the factory.

Li: Was this done at Boeing Field or in Everett, or where was—?

01-00:49:27

Maye: Oh, no. There wasn't such a thing as Everett. There wasn't such a thing as Renton. Well, Renton started up during the war. But heaven's sakes, it was Plant Two. Plant Two. Oh, dear.

Li: Did you think much about what you were helping build?

01-00:50:01

Maye: Oh, heaven's sakes. It wasn't what you got paid, in those days. It wasn't what you got paid; it was getting the job done. That was important, is getting it done, and done right. You didn't care what you got paid. It was the effort. We needed the parts and we needed the planes, to win the war. And actually, the B-17 won the war.

Li: Yeah. So did you feel a lot of pride, then, every day, going to work?

01-00:50:42

Maye: Oh, yes! Oh, yes. Oh. We had bomb shelters across the street and we had drills to get across the street. Oh, dear. There were spiders in them. Oh, dear.

Li: Was the job social at all? Was it easy to make friends, working at Boeing?

01-00:51:12

Maye: Well, it wasn't just friends; it was getting the job done.

Li: But I mean after work, would you spend time together socially?

01-00:51:22

Maye: Oh, no. No. Just come home and eat and sleep, and back to work.

Li: Could you tell me what an average day was like for you, what your tasks were when you'd get to work?

01-00:51:39

Maye: At work?

Li: At Boeing, yeah. What an average day would be like.

01-00:51:43

Maye:

Oh. Well, on the phone. We did most of our work on the phone and calling different companies and so forth. Although I'll never forget, an engineer—and I knew engineers; I'd go up to their desks. He'd pull a blueprint. Well, let me say, we were always running out of stock. SOS's, supply out of stock. Actually, I caught a guy down in the shops. He'd written a request for a part, and when I pulled the blueprint—well, I went SOS. Boy, there was nothing worse than being SOS, out of stock on an item. I pulled the blueprint, found out the engineer, and he had called out a screw that was not the regular kind. It didn't have the regular kind of threads on it. So I went up to this engineer, and I says, "Hey, I have shims, and I have these other screws and so forth. Can't we use something? Can't we do something?" He changed it. So together, we got a commendation for changing the drawings, for some reason. Anyway, it was cheaper and what have you. I could get the supplies. Because I called all over to get the screw that was called out, and no one would manufacture it. They just didn't want to set up for that.

Li:

Was it difficult to get your hands on supplies during the war, to get the parts that you needed?

01-00:54:31

Maye:

Oh, yeah! And get them on time and so on and so forth, yeah. Get the right supply and the right count.

Li:

How long were the shifts that you were working? Was it a regular work day, that you would be there?

01-00:54:46

Maye:

Yes.

Li:

Were you living at home with your parents?

01-00:54:50

Maye:

No. No. Well, I had an apartment.

Li:

What neighborhood were you in?

01-00:55:01

Maye:

Greenwood.

Li:

In Greenwood? Did you live alone?

01-00:55:07

Maye:

No, I had a gal that worked at Boeing, in a different department.

Li:

Would you commute together to get to work?

01-00:55:21

Maye: Yes, we did. You always rode with someone, because there wasn't the bus service.

Li: So did you have a car at that time?

01-00:55:34

Maye: No.

Li: You would just get a ride with another Boeing employee?

01-00:55:38

Maye: Yes. You always had to work that problem.

Li: So could you tell me a little bit about the interaction between men and women at Boeing, at Plant Two? Did the men seem pretty comfortable working with women?

01-00:56:04

Maye: Oh, I have seen a lot of prejudice over the years. A *lot* of prejudice. Actually, you got along with everyone. That was just part of the job, was to get along with people.

Li: Can you share with me some of the things that you saw?

01-00:56:43

Maye: Like?

Li: You said the prejudice. Against women, specifically?

01-00:56:48

Maye: Oh, yes! Oh, heavens. Well, if you were five months pregnant, you had to quit Boeing.

Li: Oh, really?

01-00:56:55

Maye: Oh, yeah. That was the rule. I don't know as it was written, but it was a rule that you had to quit if you were five months pregnant. Always, the women didn't make as much as the men. Always. That was true when I made supervisor, later on. See, I put in over forty years at Boeing.

Li: So you went back to Boeing?

01-00:57:35

Maye: I went back to Boeing, yes.

Begin Audiofile 2 04-18-2012.mp3

Li: This is Robin Li, speaking with Velva Maye in Seattle, Washington, as part of the Rosie the Riveter National Home Front oral history project. This is April 18, 2012, tape two. So we were talking a little bit about the working conditions at Boeing, some of the things that you saw, in terms of difference in pay that women received.

02-00:00:49

Maye: Well, it's true. As I say, I put in over forty years at Boeing. I went back to work at Boeing in 1953. But the biggest problem, I think, probably the biggest prejudice, was the fact that a woman never drew a man's wage.

Li: Not during the war, not after the war, not the whole time you were at Boeing.

02-00:01:23

Maye: Yes, yes. That's true.

Li: Even if they had the identical job?

02-00:01:28

Maye: Right.

Li: Was that well known? Did everybody know that and think it was okay?

02-00:01:35

Maye: The last few years, they've put more pressure on the fact that women don't draw the same wage as men, for the same job.

Li: I wanted to go back and ask you about the internment of the Japanese. Because you were in high school when—you were going to high school in Queen Anne?

02-00:02:14

Maye: Queen Anne, yeah, high school.

Li: Were there Japanese students in your high school?

02-00:02:17

Maye: Yes. One Japanese gal that I was close to, she was a good student. All of a sudden, she just came up missing.

Li: Was she American born?

02-00:02:35

Maye: Yes.

Li: Did you know about the camps?

02-00:02:41

Maye: I didn't go to her family. I didn't go to her house. But she was certainly real nice—

Li: A schoolmate.

02-00:02:54

Maye: Yeah, yeah, schoolmate.

Li: Had you heard about the camps and knew what was happening?

02-00:03:02

Maye: Oh, yes. So when she disappeared, it was well known then, that—

Li: Do you remember the sentiment at the time in Seattle, what you heard people saying about the Japanese being taken away? Did people generally support it?

02-00:03:24

Maye: Well, as far as myself is concerned, I thought, well, not everyone's guilty.

Li: Right, right.

02-00:03:37

Maye: So the nation more or less condemned everyone, all the Japanese. I didn't feel that way. I didn't feel that way.

Li: Did you hear other people around you expressing the same thing? Or did people sort of seem to think, oh, if the government's doing it, they must have their reasons?

02-00:04:04

Maye: Well, it wasn't talked about.

Li: Oh, so you didn't hear discussion of it.

02-00:04:08

Maye: No, no. It wasn't talked about. Very little was said.

Li: Did you remember any rationing during the war? Do you remember experiencing that?

02-00:04:22

Maye: Oh, yes! Oh, my, yes. Sugar and—well, especially gas. Boy, everyone's coupons for gas was very important. Meat and everything. Everything.

Li: So did it affect your daily life?

02-00:04:48

Maye: Oh, yes. You had to make adjustments for it. Yeah. In fact, my parents, they traveled—when I was going to high school, we were still in the trailer house. A more modern trailer house. It was parked on Greenwood. Then my dad bought Japanese land. It's now a park, over on First and about 89th or 90th. It's now a park. Anyway, he bought land, and he built an apartment, sort of, for me. It had a kitchen and a living room and a bathroom. Then outside had a

bathroom for the motor home and to park the car inside. Well, my parents moved on, because my mother suffered from asthma. It was too damp up here, so they went south, to California, and I was left with the house. You might say a house, but it was really an apartment-sized deal. I decided, hey, I was going to build the garage into a bedroom. So I did.

Li: By yourself?

02-00:07:08

Maye: Well, yeah, more or less, yeah. The neighbor next door had a teenager that—well, he was beyond teenager, but a young fellow—that sort of helped me. But I did most of the work myself.

Li: What year was that?

02-00:07:39

Maye: Oh, this was '44 or something like that. '43? '43, maybe.

Li: Did your father buy the land, then, when the Japanese were interned? He bought it when they left?

02-00:08:03

Maye: Yes.

Li: Okay. So it was bought in '41 and built it—or '42, maybe.

02-00:08:08

Maye: Yes.

Li: Where in California did they go?

02-00:08:13

Maye: Santa Monica.

Li: So was that unusual, to be a woman living—to have her own place at that age?

02-00:08:24

Maye: Yes. It was. But I was independent. I'm used to being by myself.

Li: Right, because in high school you had been taking care of yourself for quite a while.

02-00:08:37

Maye: Yes. And on the farm, I was by myself, really.

Li: Right, right.

02-00:08:48

Maye: So heaven's sakes. On the farm I had a real neat dog and horse. My horse looked out for me. All I had to do is drop the reins over its head and it would

wait for me, no matter what. Most horses don't do that. Well, this is going back. But anyway, I would take my dog and my horse, and I had a penknife, and I'd go hunting gophers. Because I think you got two cents a tail or something, penny a tail or something, in town. So I would fill a Karo Syrup can of water and spot a gopher, and get off my horse and pour a little bit of water down. Then usually, the gopher would come out another hole, and my dog would grab it and hang on till I got there. Then I would take and kill the gopher and cut its tail off. I had a jar of salt, so I'd collect gopher tails.

Li: Put the tails in there?

02-00:10:39

Maye: Yes. Then Saturday night, when we'd take the milk to town, I'd get a big ice cream bar. Igloo. I think it was called Igloo or something, ice cream bar. Boy, those were good.

Li: Would they pay you because they were a nuisance, the gophers, and they wanted—?

02-00:11:06

Maye: Oh, yes. You got pay for that. It was the county or—

Li: How old were you when you did that?

02-00:11:19

Maye: Oh, I don't know, eight years old, something like that. I was hunting gophers.

Li: So that was your first job?

02-00:11:29

Maye: Yes. [they laugh] You might say. Oh, shoot. Well, anyway, the Boeing life was interesting, because after the war, I quit for six years—running the service station, lubing cars and what have you. Then I went back, and then I built this house because my daughter came along. I built this place, and my husband never saw the place. He wouldn't travel from Greenwood over to here until the place was built. Before this place we had bought a place on 103rd, just off of Greenwood, near the station.

Li: Where the gas station was.

02-00:12:40

Maye: Yes. His parents lived at 101st, I think, just off of Greenwood. So he was close to his parents' place. As I say, looking back now, he should've had treatment.

Li: Would he not get in a car, even? He didn't want to travel?

02-00:13:09

Maye: Well, no. Car was fine, but only around a small area.

Li: Yeah. So did you actually build this house, or did you have it built?

02-00:13:23

Maye: Oh, I had it built.

Li: Okay. I just asked because—

02-00:13:26

Maye: Had it built.

Li: Because you sound handy. I thought maybe you did it yourself.

02-00:13:29

Maye: No. No, I had it built. That fireplace is still new.

Li: Wow.

02-00:13:35

Maye: I've never used the fireplace here. I have another fireplace in the TV room that I use.

Li: Wow. And what year did you build this house?

02-00:13:44

Maye: In '53.

Li: So in fifty-eight years, you've never used that fireplace?

02-00:13:50

Maye: Yes. Well, yes.

Li: What year—oh, sorry.

02-00:13:54

Maye: Well, next year, it'll be sixty years since I had this place built.

Li: What year was your daughter born?

02-00:14:02

Maye: '50.

Li: 1950, okay. So you built this house in '53, and then you also went back to Boeing that same year?

02-00:14:11

Maye: Yeah. The reason I went back to Boeing is because I needed drapes, and I needed this and that, and the service station didn't provide it. So that was the main reason I went back to Boeing. When I went back to Boeing, I went into the purchasing department, as an analyst, a systems analyst, I guess they call

it. Figure out how many parts a person needs and so on and so forth, and posting requisitions and so forth.

So anyway, I got a ride with Luckman. He was an ex-school teacher, and he was selected to work with computers. But IBM would only send men back east to learn computers. Only men. So being curious, I kept asking him about it. Well, one thing, when I was at Queen Anne, I took a course—well, it was different machines. Adding machine and what else did we have? Anyway, the teacher experimented with something new that year, and whenever you were ready on a machine, for a test, you could ask her for a test. So man, I ate that up, because I could go at my own speed. So I was one of the first ones finished with all the machines in the room. So she sent me down to the administration office, the school administration office, which was down below Queen Anne, the school, during my period, and then I was to work with a computer. Cards, because when computers first came out, we didn't have the—what do I want to say?

Li: The hard drive?

02-00:17:31

Maye: No. Monitors. Computers took up a whole room. They were vacuum-tubed, instead of just chips that they have now. But we didn't have screens in those days, we only had cards. So anyway, she sent me down there because they had cards. We could keypunch the cards, learn to read the cards, and sort them. They had a sorting machine. Man. Because I had that information, when I rode with Luckman—and he was sent back east to learn computers—I just kept asking him questions. “What do you do with this,” and “what do you do with that,” and so on and so forth, and so he shared everything with me. So one day, I got asked to take a test. I passed the test, and, son of a gun, instead of sending me back east they taught me here. Guys that had been back east, they taught me. So Luckman—I wonder what happened to him. Last I heard, he went to Hawaii. But anyway.

Li: So you were working on computers in the fifties?

02-00:19:29

Maye: Yes.

Li: Wow.

02-00:19:31

Maye: In the fifties, in the late fifties.

Li: Not a lot of people doing that. Certainly, not a lot of women.

02-00:19:34

Maye: Oh, well, I transferred into the computer world.

Li: So did they call the department you were in computers? Or was it still called systems—?

02-00:19:46

Maye: Analyst?

Li: Analyst.

02-00:19:50

Maye: Well, they didn't do it right away. Well, when I got into computers, it was the late fifties. Let's see. One thing, there wasn't many women involved. I was trying to think if they renamed the department, but I don't think they did right away. I don't think so.

Li: What were you doing in that department?

02-00:20:47

Maye: Oh. I was put in as materiel—which was another word for purchasing—materiel analyst, writing programs. I've written lots of computer programs.

Li: So back then, when you would write programs, what did that mean? What did it look like to write a program then?

02-00:21:12

Maye: Well, one thing is, I usually print everything that I do now, just because I was so oriented to using print with computers. So you would write your code in—well, how do I explain this? Everything was so different from now. Oh, dear.

Li: Was it numbers then?

02-00:22:08

Maye: Oh, no. Oh, no, letters. You learned to read—what I did is I set up a forty-hour class, forty hours of training, for people in Materiel to learn how to read computer cards and work with computers, because I was associated with computers. Anyway, what happened is that besides writing programs to do certain things, to keep track of records and so forth, I set up this class for forty hours, and I gave them a test at the end. But I didn't grade it. I went to their individual desk and explained what they did wrong and why they didn't understand what was going on, and so on and so forth. So heaven's sakes, I even had people in my class from outside of Materiel.

Li: Were these mostly men that you were teaching?

02-00:23:56

Maye: Some women. Some women. This was before I got actually coding in data processing, I'd set up this class in Materiel, to teach everyone about the cards and how to use the computers. Then I transferred over. So to jump ahead, Grace, that I worked with during the war—

Li: Right, not one of the twins, but the other woman.

02-00:24:56

Maye: Yeah, the other woman, Grace. I'm her guardian now.

Li: You're kidding.

02-00:25:02

Maye: No. I'm her guardian now. She lives on Magnolia.

Li: So you still see her every week?

02-00:25:09

Maye: Yes. Yes. Probably tomorrow.

Li: Oh, my goodness.

02-00:25:13

Maye: Yeah. Yeah, I'm her guardian. She doesn't have any living relatives at all. She doesn't have a brother, sister. The government, or the lawyers, even checked overseas, to her mother's family, and they couldn't find anyone. So anyway. But that's another story.

Li: But so Grace was back at Boeing with you, during these years. She was still there in the fifties, when you went back?

02-00:25:53

Maye: Yes. Oh, she stayed on thirty-some years at Boeing. But I got involved with her again. See, I lost contact with her when I transferred into data processing. I got in contact with her again when I got involved with renovating a B-17, down at the Museum of Flight.

Li: So you participated in that renovation?

02-00:26:26

Maye: Twenty years, I've been involved.

Li: Oh, my goodness.

02-00:26:29

Maye: I've set up a luncheon for all of our B-17 volunteers this weekend, Saturday, down at the Yankee Grill, in Renton.

Li: Are most of the volunteers people who worked on the bomber originally?

02-00:26:51

Maye: Well, it's mixed. We have a couple of new guys that are your age, you might say.

Li: Just history buffs?

02-00:27:07

Maye: Yes.

Li: Well, I want to hear about that, but I wanted to go back and just ask you what you did for childcare when you were working at Boeing. Did they have childcare at Boeing?

02-00:27:17

Maye: No. No. No. No. No. Never. Right across the street, Campbell's, they had a daughter five years older than Sharon, my daughter, so she was sort of her playmate. Up at the end of the street, Mrs. Brown, she had a daughter and she babysat for me. Then I had to look for a babysitter. Boy, I had a list of things that they had to abide by. I ran into a lady on about 122nd. She had two daughters. She had an older daughter that she'd sort of raised by herself, and then she had a younger daughter, the same age as mine. She decided that she didn't want to raise her child, the youngest one, by herself, so she was looking—she was critical of me, too, what my values were. Anyway, she was a babysitter for at least five years. She took her kid and mine to school.

The reason I chose this property is that the school, Northgate Elementary School was close by and it was new. I went to visit it because in those days, when you visited a school, you could tell what kind of neighborhood you were moving into, because they didn't bus people in. So I chose this area because of the school. So when I selected a babysitter, she walked them to school. Heaven's sakes, they had relatives in Canada, and my daughter would go with them, up to Canada and so on and so forth. The father, he had a bad arm. He treated my daughter like his daughter. He was so loving to his daughter, and mine likewise. So it worked out wonderful. So babysitting, I had neighbors and everyone that helped out.

Li: Because your husband was over at the gas station and couldn't come here.

02-00:31:08

Maye: Yes. Well, about that time, after I moved in here, I got a divorce. That was traumatic, but anyhow.

Li: That was very uncommon for that time, wasn't it?

02-00:31:32

Maye: Yes. But I initiated it.

Li: It sounds like it must've been difficult circumstances.

02-00:31:40

Maye: Yeah. But looking back, I now blame a lot of the problems that we had onto the fact that he didn't have proper care when he came out of the service.

Li: Yeah. Yeah. But it seems at that time, they didn't appreciate how traumatizing those experiences could be.

02-00:32:00

Maye: They didn't. They didn't realize how difficult it was. So anyway.

Li: Do you remember the bombing of Hiroshima, where you were when you heard about that and the end of the war?

02-00:32:19

Maye: Well, I was working at Boeing.

Li: Did they make an announcement at work that the war was over?

02-00:32:31

Maye: Let's see. I don't remember that, the exact thing I was doing, like I remember when Pearl Harbor was bombed. I remember distinctly where I was—in the car, going over the bridge, Aurora Bridge—when we heard the news. I don't know as it was announced at work. I think I heard it when I got home.

Li: Yeah. Yeah. What did that mean for you, in terms of—?

02-00:33:12

Maye: Oh, wonderful. It was wonderful. Yes.

Li: But then did you have to leave your job, because of the end of the war and that there was no longer the demand for the B-17?

02-00:33:29

Maye: Oh, no! Oh, no. Actually, I think it was '69 or '70, when they put up a sign here in Seattle, the last one out, turn out the lights or something. The last one to leave or something. I had so much work to do at Boeing. They dumped about two or three people's work on me. I never worked so hard in my life.

Li: So Boeing was a good employer to have.

02-00:34:06

Maye: Oh, my, yes. Oh, yes. Yes.

Li: So I'm curious to hear about this work you've done renovating the B-17, because when you go to visit the Museum of Flight, it's one of the sort of more famous planes produced by Boeing.

02-00:34:24

Maye: Yes.

Li: It was so critical to World War II.

02-00:34:27

Maye: It's a shame that the B-17's sitting outside. It's just a shame, because all of our renovation is going to be ruined by the weather. I heard about Boeing taking over renovating the plane in about 1991. What happened is that the

owner of the airplane, the B-17—Robinson is his name—he willed it to the Museum of Flight.

Li: He had bought it after the war.

02-00:35:20

Maye: Oh, yes. He's the one that entered it in—he flew it over to England for the *Memphis Belle* movie. He had it in four different movies. So anyway, he died of a heart attack in 1990. What are you doing now?

Li: I was just checking to make sure the sound is good, but it's fine, yeah.

02-00:35:48

Maye: Oh. He died in 1990. Museum of Flight didn't know—see, Museum of Flight and Boeing are separate. They are associated, but they are separate. They're different companies. So Museum of Flight didn't know what to do with the airplane. It had been a crop duster in California, and they'd put a door in the side of it and they had changed the instrument panel, and everything was—oh, it was all run down. So they asked Boeing. Because it came off the production line in '43, it has my parts on it.

So when I heard that Boeing was going to help Museum of Flight—I got involved. They gave us space at the Renton plant, to renovate it—I thought, well, I'm going to get involved in this, because it has my parts on it. So in 1997—I think it was about 1997—I thought, well, gee, it would be nice if I could find some of the buyers that supplied parts for the plane. I knew Grace's married name, because she got married and still continued working at Boeing. So her last name is Warren. So I asked around some of the old-timers, where they thought she lived, and they thought that she lived in Magnolia. I got out the Yellow Book and looked up Warren, and the first person I called was Grace. So I asked her if she would be interested in seeing the airplane and I explained the circumstances, and she said yes. So I said, well, I'd pick her up and take her down. I never got beyond the door of her house. She was always at the door. When I took her down, she wasn't dressed spiffy, but you don't expect a person to dress up for something like that. I took her picture with the engineer.

Oh, by the way, I guess I haven't explained. In renovating the airplane, the engineer that signed off most of the drawings for Boeing helped us.

Li: Oh, really?

02-00:39:53

Maye: Yes. Roy Ostling was his name. He was just wonderful to work with. They rewired, completely rewired the airplane, and everything was torn apart and redone, and the B-17 is per drawing. The airplane is per drawing. It is absolutely spotless. Everything works. We got radio equipment and we had a team of radio guys make it work. So everything works. But anyhow, it's 1997;

I took Grace down and had her picture taken with Roy Ostling. She had my telephone number then, and so she'd call me once in a while.

Then one day she called and I was—oh, I think I was writing bills or something. I happened to ask her, I says, “Do you have a will?” Because I realized that she was by herself. Her husband had died several years ago, and she was by herself. She said no. I says, “Well, Grace,” I says, “You have property.” I says, “Everyone needs a will. I will find a lawyer to write you a will.” She says, “No, no, don't bother.” Well, I called a lawyer that I knew in Ballard, and asked for a lawyer in Magnolia, because she'd only deal with people in Magnolia. So they recommended this person. Vortman is his name.

I called him and told him the circumstances, and he says, “I'll meet you in two days.” I thought, “What? He's with it.” So I met him and he had a pro—What do they call them? Pro tem? Anyway, he had an assistant with him. I called Grace and told her that I was bringing him over. She said, “Oh, no, don't bother.” So when we went over to Grace's place, I said, “Grace, this is Velva.” I says, “I want to talk to you.” She opened the door and I pushed it open. I couldn't believe what I saw. Nothing but papers everywhere. It was a disaster. When I opened the door, hardly room to stand, for the three of us there. So the lawyer says, “Let's sit down at the kitchen table and find out something, if I can help you.” So she says, “No.” She says, “I'm not interested and I'm not about to.” So she got sort of feisty, and so we left.

So on the way out, the lawyer says, “I'll meet you at the bank, down at the village, and we'll talk about it.” So we got down there, and he said, “Heaven's sakes. The only way you can help her is to be guardian.” So I thought she was destitute. She had the neighbor lady across the street take her shopping every two weeks, and she died. Then she called me to take her to an eye doctor downtown. You help out people, so I took her downtown. Well, her jacket was torn and I was so ashamed, the way she was dressed. It was just terrible. Of course, I hadn't been to her house up until that time. So I decided, well, I'm going to buy her a jacket because she's destitute. So I came out here to Northgate and I happened to get the right size, and took it back and I says, “Grace,” I says, “I have a jacket for you.” I says, “I want you to try it on.” So I pushed the door open and that's what I saw. Oh, what a mess.

So anyway, the door's open and then to the right of you is the living room; but you couldn't tell it was the living room because there was paper over everything. It was just terrible! So anyway, to make a long story short, the lawyer set up a date for a court hearing, and I had to maneuver her to get her to go. I called her at six o'clock in the morning, I think, to get her up and get her dressed. Oh, dear. Anyway, I got her out of the house, and the lawyer had a car especially for her, and he had a wheelchair and so forth. Anyway, we got her down there and into the judge's chamber and he says, “I want everyone out of here,” and he says, “I'm going to talk to Grace.” Well, the family, immediate family is all gone, and on her husband's side, there's a wife of one

of the brothers of her husband. That wife has a daughter that's a lawyer. So I figured, going into the court, that the judge would select the in-law. But Grace didn't know her. But she knew Velva. And she spoke highly of me. So I walk back into the courtroom and the judge says, "I have selected Velva Maye as guardian." I ended up paying a bail, or I had to pay bonding. I had to be bonded. Oh, my gosh! And I had to sign umpteen papers. I didn't know what I was getting into. I would never recommend being guardian again, to anyone.

Li: A lot of work.

02-00:49:52

Maye: Oh. I've been through hell. I've been through hell. Yeah.

Li: How lucky for her, though.

02-00:50:05

Maye: Huh?

Li: I said how lucky for her, to have someone she trusts.

02-00:50:09

Maye: Well, yeah. And I'm the only one. Her neighbors were so thankful and they've been so good to me, because I've stepped in. Jeepers.

Li: But you've known her now— because you met when you were working at Boeing in—

02-00:50:36

Maye: '42.

Li: So you've known her since when?

02-00:50:39

Maye: Seventy years!

Li: My goodness.

02-00:50:42

Maye: Seventy years. I've known her seventy years. Criminy sakes.

Li: So I wanted to ask you the end of the B-17 renovation story. Did you participate in sort of fundraising to help get money to renovate the B-17 and get it all fixed up?

02-00:51:03

Maye: Oh. Well, see, all of us volunteers anticipated, when we started, that we would be flying the airplane around the United States. So Jim Mayhall and I, we decided that we would get things together to sell, to raise money, different places that we'd go. So we got at least, oh, over twenty items. I designed the B-17 cup to sell.

In the eighties, I bought an RV, thirty-four foot long, and I drove it for fifteen years. My navigator used to live across the street from me, on 103rd Street, when my daughter was a baby.

Li: Do you want me to pause for a minute?

02-00:52:44

Maye: No. Let's see, Where do I want to direct you now?

Li: So in the eighties, you basically drove—you lived on the road for fifteen years?

02-00:53:06

Maye: Yes. Actually, the lady across the street, she was putting her husband through University of Washington, as a pharmacist, and then they ended up buying a pharmacy in Fort Collins, Colorado. They never had any children, and they were square dancers. They had an airplane, and they had an RV, so that was their entertainment. Well, he was killed in the airplane. So she found out that I had an RV, and so she said she would fly out here, at her own expense—she wouldn't let me pay—and be my navigator.

Li: Good friend!

02-00:54:00

Maye: So we went from Vancouver, clear across Canada to Nova Scotia, down the East Coast. I had my RV in all except eight states in the United States, besides Canada.

Li: Wow.

02-00:54:18

Maye: So anyway, there's a lot of story to tell, our adventures around the United States.

Li: So the B-17 renovation was after you returned from those—?

02-00:54:42

Maye: It was part of that. I've traveled. I've been fortunate enough to travel. I've been to Australia, New Zealand, the Fijis, Sweden and Europe and Scotland, especially, and so forth.

Li: Wow. Was there anything else about the war years that we haven't talked about, or any stories from that time that I haven't asked about?

02-00:55:24

Maye: Well, the attitude was different, of people then. The attitude was, what can I do to help out? As I said before, it wasn't what you got paid, it was getting the job done, and done right. That was what was so important. So what you could contribute, that's what you wanted to do.

Li: So looking back, how important was your work on the B-17, to you personally, in your life?

02-00:56:12

Maye: Everything. Really. During the war years, it was the attitude of everybody, just to get the job done and win the war. That was so important, was to win the war. When the announcement was made that the war was over, heaven's sakes, I remember being elated. Just elated. Just, boy, it's all been worth it. It's been worth it.

Li: Well, thank you so much for talking with me today. This has been really such a pleasure. Thank you.