

Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

**Oralee McCoy**

**Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project**

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,  
The National Park Service, and the City of Richmond, California

Interviews conducted by  
Nadine Wilmot  
in 2005

Copyright © 2007 by The Regents of the University of California

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

\*\*\*\*\*

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between The Regents of the University of California and Oralee McCoy, dated March 23, 2005. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, Mail Code 6000, University of California, Berkeley, 94720-6000, and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project: An Oral History with Oralee McCoy conducted by Nadine Wilmot, 2005, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2007.

## **Discursive Table of Contents—Ora Lee McCoy**

### Audiofile 1

Born in Texas—descended from Virginia slaves—grew up in a very rural area—attended segregated schools—father grew their food—father died of burst tonsils—no penicillin in those days—father had served in France in WWI—mother worked for the Works Progress Association (WPA), a New Deal institution—moved to Ft. Worth Texas, and then to Oakland—tells of some bizarre romances—because of rationing, some women to use leg paint instead of stockings

### Audiofile 2

Liked the Bay Area, wanted to stay—her sister suffered through a traumatic death—her daughter became the first Ms. Oakland pageant winner—recalls the racist insults her daughter received as a child— began working in real estate—helped break the informal racial barrier in Bay Area real estate—black realtors began gaining success—racial discrimination had been bad in employment and in getting loans—discusses recent Bay Area housing trends

Interview with Oralee McCoy  
Interviewed by: Nadine Wilmot  
Transcriber: Julie Allen  
[Interview #1: March 23, 2005]  
[Begin minidisc 1]

**Wilmot:**

Well, okay, so as you said—could you say again what today's date is?

**McCoy:**

Today's date is the third, the twenty-third, '05. The time is ten minutes to twelve.

**Wilmot:**

I'm Nadine Wilmot from the Regional Oral History Office at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library. I'm here with Mrs. Oralee McCoy and we're here to talk about many things. Where we usually start off is where and when were you born?

**McCoy:**

I was born February 2, eight day, 1922.

**Wilmot:**

February 28 or February 2?

**McCoy:**

Second month, eighth day.

**Wilmot:**

February 8.

**McCoy:**

Yes. Second month.

**Wilmot:**

And where were you born?

**McCoy:**

Flint, Texas.

**Wilmot:**

And was your family from Flint?

**McCoy:**

Yes. Now, if you wanted to know the original beginning of my family, I have to start back at Virginia.

**Wilmot:**

I would love that.

**McCoy:**  
Okay.

**Wilmot:**  
And please also tell me your parents' names when you get to them.

**McCoy:**  
Okay. All I know of the beginning of my parents was Mother. Mother was sold as a slave in Virginia, as a nine year-old girl to a master from Texas. She was sold three times, but the final sale was a master from Texas. She was taken away from her family and they traveled in a wagon from Virginia to Texas. When she got to Texas they took her and they made a pallet under the house with the dog for her bed, and that's where she stayed.

**Wilmot:**  
Now is this your great-great grandmother?

**McCoy:**  
This is my great-grandmother. Great great-grandmother. This is my grandmother's mother. She learned her ABC's by listening quietly at night as the master taught their children upstairs.

**Wilmot:**  
Through the floor?

**McCoy:**  
Yes. One of the things that was very interesting to me, she said whenever it would rain and the river would rise, she said there was lumber outside, she'd go get one of those long planks, and go to the river, and throw it out in the river, trying to get across the river, to go back to Virginia. But every time she'd throw it out, before she could step on it, it would float away. So she never had a chance to step out on the plank. That's the way she grew up. As she grew up, she became a—she was little, she weighed ninety-eight pounds. She was used as a water slave. She'd take water to the field, to the slaves. She would always tell this—my grandmother would tell me this—and she said, "Aunt Puss {?} would get a whipping every morning." And my grandmother would laugh about it. I said, "Grandmother, why Aunt Puss would get a whipping?" She said, "The boss would ride a horse and use a whip, because Aunt Puss couldn't keep up with the rest of them working in the field, so she'd get a whipping every morning." She would tell that, it was funny. I told Grandmother, I said, "Grandmother, that's not funny. That's not funny at all." She would take water, that was her job, to take water, to the slaves in the field.

**Wilmot:**  
This was your mom's—grandmother's mother?

**McCoy:**  
This was my grandmother's mother. She was a breeder with big men. The reason why they bred her with big men so they would be big slaves.

**Wilmot:**  
And she was ninety-eight pounds.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Do you know how many children she had?

**McCoy:**

She had six.

**Wilmot:**

Did she get to raise her children?

**McCoy:**

No. Only with my grandmother, the rest of them was moved from place to place. She was bred by white men and black men. There was two white children and there was four blacks. She said because of jealousy that somebody chewed some gum and put poison on it and put it on the gatepost, and the little white girl got the gum and chewed it and her stomach swelled up and she died. Only the white son grew up to be an adult. All we ever knew about him was his picture. He was a nice looking man. We never saw him, my grandmother never saw him again. She had a chance to see one brother that lived near her, and he was a big man. Now my grandmother weighed over 300 pounds, she wore a size fourteen shoe, she was 6'3", and she was big. Big hands and everything. She wasn't a flabby, fat woman, she was a big woman. I always would help my grandmother when I was around her to put on her stockings because they wore long dresses and I wanted to see her legs because she had such pretty legs. My grandmother never knew why I wanted to put on her stockings. I wanted to see her legs. All of us, all of us from my grandmother has beautiful legs. I do too. And it's because of my grandmother. My daughter has them too.

**Wilmot:**

I have a question. Did you grow up—so you grew up knowing your grandmother, and did you grow up hearing about your great grandmother, or did you actually—

**McCoy:**

No, I would go to my grandmother and whenever she was—she'd always sew, and when I had the opportunity I'd go sit on the floor by her and I would talk to her about her mother.

**Wilmot:**

So you never had the opportunity to meet your great grandmother?

**McCoy:**

Oh no, because my grandmother said one day she went to work—she was a young lady. Her mother was a young lady. She went to work. Evidently my grandmother was a teenager. I'll never forget my grandmother talking about how she would cook and nobody to train her how to cook, because she'd fry a chicken and every time she'd see blood she'd take the chicken out and wash it again. She never knew that the way to really fry chicken or to get rid of the blood. One day her mother went to work and took her water and she never came back no more, and never heard anything else.

**Wilmot:**

She lost her mom at a young age.

**McCoy:**

At a young age, yes. I remember seeing a blouse and a skirt from her mother. It had the big sleeves, and a puff, and a big skirt with the hoop. I tried my best to keep up with that, because I wanted to keep it. I was asking my aunt what happened to Grandma Mother's clothes, what happened to my grandmother's clothes. She said, "I don't know." She said somebody stole them. Because it was all put in a box, a big box and nailed up, but it all disappeared.

**Wilmot:**

When you say your great grandmother was ninety-eight pounds, did your grandmother tell you anything else about how her mother looked?

**McCoy:**

She said she was very pretty, and she had very pretty hair. She was an Indian lady.

**Wilmot:**

This is your great grandmother?

01:00:10:02

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

And when you say Indian, was she full-blood?

**McCoy:**

Yes, she was a full-blood Indian.

**Wilmot:**

And do you know what tribe?

**McCoy:**

No, I never knew that. I never knew anything else, any further back, than my grandmother and what my grandmother told me. That's as far as she knew. Because I asked my grandmother, I said, "Did you know who your father was?" She said, "All I know, it was Hamberton," but that was the boss's name, Hamberton.

**Wilmot:**

Like the boss—was that the master?

**McCoy:**

The master, yes. But they called him the boss.

**Wilmot:**

How old were you when you were hearing about these stories from your grandmother?

**McCoy:**

Oh, ten, twelve, thirteen, because I'd always talk to her about it, and I'd hear the same story over again. That's the reason I know it so well, she'd tell me the same thing, so it had to be the truth.

**Wilmot:**

Did your grandmother—what kind of work did she do?

**McCoy:**

She was a housewife, worked on the farm.

**Wilmot:**

Did you grow up with your grandfather as well? Did you know him?

**McCoy:**

Yes, my grandfather died at the age of fifty-three from diabetes. I won't forget that either. [phone rings]

**Wilmot:**

Should I keep on going or do you want to get the phone?

**McCoy:**

I'd like to get it.

**Wilmot:**

Let's take a quick break. [interruption] Okay, that's recording again. This one's going to try to turn itself off. Okay, now the grandmother and great grandmother you were speaking of, is that your mother's side of the family or father's side?

**McCoy:**

Mother.

**Wilmot:**

That's your mother's side. Can you tell me your mother's name?

**McCoy:**

My mother's name was Emma Lenoit {?}, grandmother's name Maddy Lenoit. My grandfather's name Early Lenoit.

**Wilmot:**

Was your family—how long was your family in Flint, Texas, before you moved? Did your whole family come here, or did you just come here?

**McCoy:**

No, I came. Then my sisters—my sister and my three brothers came.

**Wilmot:**

So you were the one who led the way.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

And why did you come here, and how old were you?

**McCoy:**

Twenty-two.

**Wilmot:**

You were twenty-two.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

That must have been right in the war years.

**McCoy:**

Yes. The reason why I came here, we lost our parents. There were six of us, six children. We lost our father when I was seven, and my brother was eight. So it was eight children left with my mother, and my mother died when I was sixteen. So I was looking for a better life.

**Wilmot:**

You were the oldest?

**McCoy:**

Next to the oldest.

**Wilmot:**

Can you tell me also your father's name?

**McCoy:**

Sherman Jones.

**Wilmot:**

What kind of work did you father do?

**McCoy:**

He was a farmer.

**Wilmot:**

Your family had property in Texas?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Did they own their property in Texas?

**McCoy:**

Yes. Look behind you and see if you see—see that Cadillac out there?

**Wilmot:**

Mm-hmm.

**McCoy:**

That's in memory of my mother. That's an old car, but it's a beauty and it's expensive. That is a part of the heirs. We had 100 acres. My grandmother and grandfather bought 100 acres. I don't know what year it was, but it was when my mother was a little girl, they bought it.

**Wilmot:**

This was your mother's parents or father's parents?

**McCoy:**

Yes, mother's parents. I don't know anything about my father's parents. I have a picture of his mother. She died of childbirth, she was white. The father, I don't know anything about, other than he was a full-blood African. That's all I know. That's the reason why we don't know hardly anything about our father's side.

**Wilmot:**

Was your father from Texas as well?

**McCoy:**

Yes. Good looking, good looking man. So was my mother.

**Wilmot:**

Did your mother work, or was she more of a housewife?

**McCoy:**

Busy having babies.

**Wilmot:**

The six of you.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

And did you grow up—was there a community around you?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Were you part of a town, or was this rural living?

**McCoy:**

It was country, very country. I tell the children now about cornmeal and all the stuff that we bought, groceries then, and if we'd buy groceries now, we'd get the corn out of the field, take it to the mill in the small town, have it ground, and that was our cornmeal, and we came back and we sifted to make bread. And it tastes much better than the cornmeal that we use today.

**Wilmot:**

What do you remember about your school, and education, when you were younger?

**McCoy:**

School? We had to walk four miles to the little country school. It was a two-room school. We had to take our two younger brothers with us. They weren't old enough to go to school, but with us being six children and nobody to keep them, we would take them to school with us.

**Wilmot:**

What are your siblings' names?

**McCoy:**

My sister was named Laomia, my brother that's alive in Texas is named Sherman, my oldest brother was named Thomas Wright, and my two younger brothers, one was named Raymond and the baby was named Lenny.

**Wilmot:**

It sounds like your mom really liked romantic names for girls.

**McCoy:**

[laughter] I thought it was beautiful, Laomia. She's named Laomia. She loves it, and she wants her daughters to carry that name on when they have children. She said, "Please carry my name on."

**Wilmot:**

Laomia. How do you spell that?

**McCoy:**

Laomia.

**Wilmot:**

Do you know who she was named for?

**McCoy:**

No I don't know.

**Wilmot:**

Your sister? Do you know who you were named for?

**McCoy:**

I just know my uncle named me.

**Wilmot:**

And in school, was your teacher a black person or a white person?

**McCoy:**

Yes, black. It was two teachers in the school.

**Wilmot:**

And did you go to school with other black children or was it integrated?

**McCoy:**

All black, it was very segregated.

**Wilmot:**

Did you grow up around white people? Did you see them?

**McCoy:**

When we walked to school we would see them, we passed by their house. Sometimes they would give us donuts. That was my first knowing of donuts. They made donuts and sometimes when we came home from school they'd give us donuts.

**Wilmot:**

And how was high school for you? What do you remember about high school?

**McCoy:**

High school? By the time we got to high school, they consolidated schools of several communities and they first made an old fashioned truck into a bus to transport us. We would get up at 3:00 in the morning, because we'd have to go forty-three miles going around picking up kids, and eventually we got four busses. Once we got the busses it was different. But we still had to get up early to get to school. The high school was a beautiful high school. It was three large buildings. It was over 500 kids would go there.

01:00:20:03

The white people burned our school down three times, because I guess it was jealousy or something. I don't know what it was. It had to be. When the white people would come from the north, they would come down there to hunt pheasants, because they let pheasant loose down there. They'd come down to hunt, and I remember my dad had a dog named Dan and he was a full-blood hound dog. They would come to my dad's house and said, "We need Dan today." They would ride horses and have guns and go shoot pheasants, and they would borrow Dan. But I didn't know that they gave Dan to my dad. He was a smart dog. I've never seen one like him now. I see them on the Greyhound busses. When he would tree something he would just stop and freeze. I never will forget that.

**Wilmot:**

When you say your father was a farmer, was he someone who farmed for the family, or did he farm to sell out in the world?

**McCoy:**

He farmed for the family.

**Wilmot:**

Okay, so you didn't have a specific crop that you farmed and then sold out?

**McCoy:**

No, it was for—when they first got married we lived on the farm with my grandparents. Then we moved to a sharecropper and he farmed for the family. But we didn't have him very long after that. He died from a simple thing as tonsillitis. They didn't have penicillin then. I never will forget, one morning he got up, and he had such a bad cold, he said, "I'm going to the doctor." He got on the horse and he rode to the doctor. He came back, he got down off the horse, he said, "Emma, I'm going to die. The doctor says my tonsils is burst, and I can't hardly talk." He couldn't hardly talk. He said, "They give me about twenty days to live." I told Mama, I said, "That's all right, you can get us another daddy!"

**Wilmot:**

When you're little, you just don't understand.

**McCoy:**

No, and no kidding, he died in exactly twenty days.

**Wilmot:**

After that time, how did your mother make her way?

**McCoy:**

I believe she lived there about a year. She hired a man to come and finish up the crop, but after that we moved back to the original—

**Wilmot:**

With the grandparents.

**McCoy:**

Yes. We had two houses. My grandparents lived in a great big old house that, from slavery, built from slavery. It was a huge house, Victorian. Then my uncle built a small house, a two-bedroom for he and his wife. They separated so when they separated we moved back in that house. I don't know whether you call it a two-bedroom, the house had three bedrooms, one of those bedrooms was a living room. It had a dining room and a kitchen.

**Wilmot:**

As you got older and you went into high school, can you tell me a little bit about what your social life was like? Actually, let me go back, I'm sorry. Did you grow up around your uncles and your aunts?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

You grew up around them.

**McCoy:**

Right. Okay, high school was very important. I became a star in basketball. We kept the championship of Texas for four years, high school, it kept the championship for the whole state of Texas. It was a gold basketball.

**Wilmot:**

What position did you play?

**McCoy:**

Guard.

**Wilmot:**

You were a guard.

**McCoy:**

I was a rough—we practiced with the boys. The boys also kept the championship, and we practiced with the boys. The girls was tomboys, all of us, we were rough. We were real rough.

**Wilmot:**

Did you ever beat the boys?

**McCoy:**

I don't know whether we beat the boys or not. I'm sure we did at some point or another. Then I was a track star, and my older brother was a track star.

**Wilmot:**

What was your favorite race, or what was the one you excelled at?

**McCoy:**

One hundred yard dash. So did he. But we never won in the leagues. But we went to the leagues but we never won.

**Wilmot:**

So how did people start to notice that you were a good athlete? How did people notice that you were so good at basketball?

**McCoy:**

Well, you know, in the school, they had try-outs, they had try-outs for players to see who would make the team, that's the way that happened.

**Wilmot:**

Academically, what was happening for you at that time? Were you excited about any particular subjects? Were there any teachers that were really turning you on?

**McCoy:**

Yes, sewing. My father, I can remember him saying, he lived in New York when he got out of World War I, he lived in New York for a while.

**Wilmot:**

He was in World War I?

**McCoy:**

Yes. When he came he told my mother, he said, "I'm going to take all of you back to New York, I'm going to live in New York." That hung in my mind, "I'm going to live in New York." So when I came to California I was heading to New York.

**Wilmot:**

Just indirectly [laughter] a little bit to the west and then to the east.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

A little zig zag.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Did you know anything more about your father's wartime experiences? Do you know where he was posted or where he went? Was he in Europe?

**McCoy:**

France.

**Wilmot:**

He was in France.

**McCoy:**

Because he said he had three children while he was there in France. I always, always wondered what they were like, and I wanted to see them. But that never happened.

**Wilmot:**

So when he came back he was older, a little older.

**McCoy:**

He got married to my mother when he came back out of World War I. I was thinking the other night to call my brother, "Where is Daddy's flag?" Because I know we had a flag and we packed it in a trunk. I would love to have that as a souvenir. It would be over a hundred years old now.

**Wilmot:**

Was this a flag that he would have had from—

**McCoy:**

From his death, that they gave my mother when the soldiers were there and they had three soldiers that did the guns and the trumpet and they gave my mother a flag.

**Wilmot:**

They gave him a military burial?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Did your mom remarry?

**McCoy:**

Yes, she remarried and stayed married for six months. Married and moved to Frankston, and that didn't work out at all.

**Wilmot:**

Frankston, Texas?

**McCoy:**

Yes. We as children—our father was real light, and this man was black, and we didn't like him, we didn't like him at all. But he said he was going to take care of my mother and us, and we moved there but he didn't, that didn't last but six months. Then we moved back to the home place.

**Wilmot:**

I wanted to ask you a little bit more about high school. When you think back on your high school, do you feel like it was a good school? Do you remember it being a place where people could really—

**McCoy:**

Very good, very good high school.

**Wilmot:**

Was it sending people to college?

**McCoy:**

Yes. I remember my home economics teacher said, "I'm going to come hard on you," and sometimes she would make me cry. She would let other students pass on their sewing, but she'd make me take mine loose and do it over again. When I finished high school she hired me to sew for her daughter. That's how well I could sew.

**Wilmot:**

What was the name of that high school?

**McCoy:**

Stanton High.

**Wilmot:**

Stanton.

**McCoy:**

Up in Bullard, Texas.

**Wilmot:**

Were you popular?

**McCoy:**

I? No more than basketball and singing, because at the graduation I sang, at our graduation.

**Wilmot:**

Were you a singer?

**McCoy:**

I was then. I can't sing now because I had triple bypass in 1999. The voice went. I got volume, but it's not a good melody at all. Now all three of my children are professional.

**Wilmot:**

Singers?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Are you an alto or soprano?

01:00:30:01

**McCoy:**

I was a soprano, I'm an alto now. Because my voice is heady (heavy?).

**Wilmot:**

What kind of music did you sing?

**McCoy:**

Oh, in the high school we had a cappella courses and we traveled around to different schools and I was one of the students in the course. I could sing either one, alto or soprano. Now she sang soprano. Now she has a voice lower than soprano. She can hit the lower soprano and she can hit the real high soprano. Now he, the one right there with the guitar, he has a band. He sings any of it, jazz, rock, all of it. I hardly get to see him because he stays so busy. He is a supervisor at one of the big markets, but he's soon going to be retiring. But he stays busy in music because he does gigs. The other one, the youngest one, he is a soul (old?) music in a church of 1,800 members. He is the music instructor and the leader in singing. He's very good.

**Wilmot:**

So when you were in high school you were singing and very active in sports. What was going on for you in terms of your social life? Would you go to dances?

**McCoy:**

Oh, the only dances we ever went to was at the school dance. It wasn't a lot of them at that time. That was very seldom. Maybe went to school—maybe a couple of school dances.

**Wilmot:**

And when you were a young person, you were probably about eight or nine, the depression hit. How did your family—did that impact them?

**McCoy:**

My mother was put on WPA, have you ever heard of that?

**Wilmot:**

Works Progress Administration.

**McCoy:**

That was her affair. She was put on WPA because she had six children. Once a month she would get the wagon and go to the little town and get loads of stuff. When she'd come back—that's when I learned about prunes. [laughter] That's where I learned about hominy, that's where I learned about grits. Just a lot of things that we learned to eat that we didn't eat because we ate off of the farm. We had plenty of food to eat off of the farm, we never went hungry. Because we had cows, ten or twelve of them, horses, ten or twelve of them, pigs, ten or twelve of them, we had all of that, chickens, guineas, turkeys, we had that. Plenty of it. They called us the rich Lenoit kids, but we weren't rich. But we lived very comfortable.

**Wilmot:**

And from their perspective you lived wealthy.

**McCoy:**

Yes, yes.

**Wilmot:**

Well, after high school, what was your mother's—your mother died when you were sixteen.

**McCoy:**

I was still in high school.

**Wilmot:**

You were still in high school. So when you were done with high school what did your universe look like, what did you think you were going to do?

**McCoy:**

I had to—there was six of us. My brother went in service, the oldest brother, then there were the other kids at home. I had to find some sort of work. So the first year I sewed. I made forty-two dresses. That was a little money coming in. I'd get less than a dollar for a dress. Then a cousin of mine, which was my uncle's son, lived in Ft. Worth, Texas, came home one night and I said, "Can I go back with you?" I said, "I need a job." Because I tried to go to college there in Tyler, Texas but my grandparents gave me \$19, that's all. I couldn't go to school off of \$19. I needed another \$19 for the second semester. Then they decided, "Oh, she don't need to go to college, she don't need to go to college." Then I decided, "It's time for me to make another move." So when my cousin came home, he said, "You want to go back with me?" I said, "I don't have no money." He gave me \$10. Out of that \$10 I got a suitcase for a dollar and a half, then I got a ticket to go from Tyler to Ft. Worth for a dollar and a half. Then that was the money I had left.

Now, I had no where to stay where I was going with him, very segregated. When we got on the bus, I had to stand up all the way from Tyler, that was a hundred and something miles to Ft. Worth. I had my suitcase, I would sit on it in the aisle, because all the white people took up the seats. When I got there I had no where to stay. My mother's cousin that I didn't know was at his brother's house and she says, "Oh, you're Emma's daughter. I'm your cousin." She said, "You can go home with me, and you can sleep with me at night because my husband works graveyard shift." And she said, "Therefore you can sleep with me at night." Because she only had one bed. That lasted—immediately I went out to find a job. I found a job at a laundry and I started making \$19 a week. Then I was able to get a room myself across the street from a nice family. I worked there until—no, the first job I got at a laundry they told me I worked too slow. I got fired in three days. So I went and got another laundry job, folding sheets. Then after that I went looking for another job. I got a job at the Armers and Company, working the meat department. There I worked and I made \$40 a week. I stayed there for two years until I decided I wanted to go—I wanted to leave there. I'm going to tell you why I wanted to leave there. While working at Armers and Company a real nice looking man lied to me and we started going together. He had a girlfriend, so when we would go in to clean up, take our showers, and put on our regular clothes for street, she would watch me. Yes, she would watch me—yes, I had a nice shape—she would watch me. I got suspicious of her. This was her boyfriend too. She was an older lady. He asked me to marry him so one night when I got off the bus, he went with me home, got off the bus, we got off the bus and were walking home, I was almost home. He said, "Keep walking." I said, "Why?" He said, "Eva is behind the bushes, the hedges there." I said, "Really?" He said, "Just keep walking because I'm going to grab her." He said, "Don't look back." That changed my mind. I said, "I got to get away from Ft. Worth. And I'm not going to marry him. I'm not going to get killed over a man." So the people I lived with said, "I know man we could make you acquainted with in Oakland, California." And they did on the phone, in a letter. Three days he was there and we got married.

**Wilmot:**

What was his name?

**McCoy:**

His name was Wilvester Morgate and he left the same day. I came out and I found out in that marriage, wasn't but three weeks that was a malygmy (polygamy?) going on in that family in that house with his aunt. I said, "Oh my gosh!" I can put this on there, because it's interesting to read.

01:00:40:03

I said, "Okay, she's talking about having a baby, she can't have no baby, she's too old!" He said, "No she's not. She has her period every month at a certain time." Ah! That struck a thing with me.

**Wilmot:**

It was polygamist? There was a lot going on there.

**McCoy:**

Yes. Then when he'd come in from work, they'd go in the bathroom together!

**Wilmot:**

So you were in Oakland?

**McCoy:**

Yes. In north Oakland.

**Wilmot:**

And you were nineteen?

**McCoy:**

No, I was twenty-two.

**Wilmot:**

You were twenty-two, you came to north Oakland. Do you remember where the house was?

**McCoy:**

Yes, I know exactly where the house is.

**Wilmot:**

What street is it on?

**McCoy:**

Market.

**Wilmot:**

On Market in north Oakland, by 55<sup>th</sup>?

**McCoy:**

No, right off of Market Street by—there's a real estate office there. I can't think of it right now. We lived upstairs.

**Wilmot:**

So you came here for marriage. You came out here to be connected to this man?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

You didn't come for the wartime work.

**McCoy:**

No, no. And, when she said to me, "How come you don't get pregnant? You ever got pregnant yet?" I said, "No." This can be on there, this makes it interesting. "Not the way your husband can screw, you're not pregnant?"

**Wilmot:**

Oh!

**McCoy:**

I said, "No." When he came in, I told him what she said. I said, "How come you go in the bathroom with her, and how come you know where her period is?" The next day she put me out.

**Wilmot:**

You were just little.

**McCoy:**

Yes. I sat on the porch. I packed my stuff in the suitcase and a box, and I sat on the little porch, like that one right there. And it was raining, I sat there all night. I had got a job, and when I went to work, I was so sleepy because I hadn't slept. The lady there, she says, "Why you so sleepy?" I said, "I got put out last night." She said, "Yes, Rainy { } told me." That was the daughter, worked there too, of this family. She said, "She told me what happened." She said, "You can go home with me, you can sleep with me until you find a place to stay. They went and picked up my clothes and I had a place to stay. Then I went to have the marriage annulled, come to find out we were never married because he never turned the license in.

**Wilmot:**

One wonders why he wanted to get married anyway when he was basically already married.

**McCoy:**

I don't know! I don't know.

**Wilmot:**

What kind of work did he do?

**McCoy:**

He worked on ships.

**Wilmot:**

Did he work in the shipyards?

**McCoy:**

No, on the water. What do you call those men that go out on ships and they work? I forget what they call them.

**Wilmot:**

Longshoremen?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

He was a Longshoreman?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

That's a good job.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

So you were twenty-two, alone in a strange place.

**McCoy:**

I think about that.

**Wilmot:**

Yes you were.

**McCoy:**

I was blessed, and I still made it. Right after that I sent for my sister.

**Wilmot:**

Will you tell me what kind of work you were doing?

**McCoy:**

I worked at the Ocelot{?} Printing Company. They still exist. I worked in the wrapping of packages first, then I graduated to the printing room. We did printing for the war. Airplanes and all of that. The great huge printing machines.

**Wilmot:**

So you were printing up leaflets? Was this paper printing?

**McCoy:**

Printing pictures, plans for airplanes, ships. I did all of that, and I became experienced at it. I worked there for fifteen years.

**Wilmot:**

You said that you found this job, how did you find this job?

**McCoy:**

Through the daughter that the mother—the daughter that lived in the house with me. She told me to come over, “I think you can get a job.” It was real nice when I first got there I thought. See, it didn't last long, it lasted three weeks.

**Wilmot:**

Well, you're lucky it didn't last any longer than that.

**McCoy:**

Yes, I know.

**Wilmot:**

You were very lucky. So you stayed working at that printing company for the next fifteen years.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

I have a couple of questions, just to back up. This is just going to take you back to Texas. How was Ft. Worth different from where you were from in Texas? Was it quite different?

**McCoy:**

Oh! It was quite different! Ft. Worth, Texas is a big city. Big city, it's a big city. Where I came from, Flint, Texas, was just a one-stop, post office and thing like that. It was the country.

**Wilmot:**

The other thing is I imagine you as this young woman, a really young person who is just coming into herself, and you moved to this big city. You have some family there, you have some relatives there.

**McCoy:**

Yes, I had some. But I worked. That \$40 a month was a lot of money because I had to send money back to the country to my sister and brothers.

**Wilmot:**

Yes. When you started hearing about coming to Oakland, were you hearing about things going on there? Was it a place you wanted to go to or was it a husband you wanted to go to?

**McCoy:**

I wanted to get away from the boyfriend and this evil girlfriend. Evil. Because she had already said she was going to kill me. When I got to where—he told me, he said, “She’s going to kill you.” I said, “Well, it’s time to get out of here.” So I didn’t tell him. This is interesting to read, I didn’t tell him. So when I told him, “I’m leaving the job today because I’ve gotten married and I’m going to California,” he was shocked. He said, “Get married to who?! Who is he?” I said, “Well, it’s the first time I’ve seen him.” That night he showed up at the house and when he came in, when he came in he pulled a gun out. “You are not going no where. You are going to marry me.” The people I lived with, I couldn’t scream and let them know nothing, he said, “Don’t you scream.” I started crying, and he says—then he hugged me and he said, “I’m not going to shoot you because I love you.” I said, “Well, I won’t go if you don’t want me to go, I won’t go.” I said, “There’s the ticket, you can tear them up.” He didn’t. He said, “Okay.” After we sat and talked, he said, “I’m going to let you go. You can go get your train, but I’ll be out there.” I said, “Okay.”

**Wilmot:**

Did he come out?

**McCoy:**

He didn’t come right then. He came two years later. Of which I had met someone else and got married to McCoy.

**Wilmot:**

How did you meet McCoy?

**McCoy:**

Let's see. How did I meet McCoy? [telephone rings] I believe it was through my sister, that's how I met him.

**Wilmot:**

Did you send for the rest of your siblings as well, or just your sister?

**McCoy:**

Not right then, just my sister.

**Wilmot:**

You want to get that?

**McCoy:**

Yes. [interruption] My sister was going with a young man who was in service. He came out, they got engaged.

**Wilmot:**

When you say "in service" do you mean in military service, or do you mean in domestic work.

**McCoy:**

No, in military service in World War II.

**Wilmot:**

Okay.

**McCoy:**

When he came out, well, he came to California, and they immediately got married. This is where the sad part ended. He was working at the army base.

01:00:50:01

This is where he met—her husband met my husband, Okay? He would come over and visit him and that's the way I met him. He was a real nice looking man, and he was three years younger than me, but he put his age up to say he was as old as I. Come to find out later he wasn't. That's the way I met him.

**Wilmot:**

What was he doing there at the army base?

**McCoy:**

I don't know exactly what type of work they were doing at the army base. But at that time, when the soldiers came out they could get a job immediately.

**Wilmot:**

He had been in the war.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

What do you remember about wartime Oakland? What was it like?

**McCoy:**

Very interesting. One of the things I remember quite well was we would stand in line to get cigarettes to send to soldiers. We would stand in long lines to get stockings. That was very very hard to get.

**Wilmot:**

Did you ever use that leg paint that people used?

**McCoy:**

Yes, yes we did.

**Wilmot:**

Instead of stockings?

**McCoy:**

Yes, we used the leg paint for stockings. There were a lot of different foods that we couldn't get, like we get now. There would be certain days, it would be chickens. You stand in line to get chicken. There was plenty of food, but there was only a certain amount at a certain time. The fun part of it, on every Friday night we went to the USO where the soldiers would come and they would have entertainment. We would go there. That's when we went to dances and danced with different soldiers. A lot of fun. It wasn't nothing like it is now, they didn't have to have security guards and all that kind of stuff. It was very good.

**Wilmot:**

How would you compare that wartime to the wartime we're currently in?

**McCoy:**

Very different. Very different. Because it appeared to me that in World War II we had a reason to fight, and this one—this is my opinion—I don't see there's a reason why we would be losing our young men like we're losing them now for the purpose which it is. The Bible said those people would always be fighting. Here Bush is going to go over there and try and stop it. It will never stop. The Bible says they have fought from the beginning, from Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar, that's where it started. He said it would be man against man, that generation would be man against man. There will always be wars, and I believe God's word. I don't think they'll ever end it.

**Wilmot:**

It's also a very different relationship to the war in terms of feeling like it's not very much here. I imagine in the 1940s it really felt like we were at war.

**McCoy:**

It was.

**Wilmot:**

And it seems almost very removed from our perspective.

**McCoy:**

Very removed, altogether. What I'm saying is we had a reason at that time. We had a reason. Because when Japan hit—what was it?

**Wilmot:**

Pearl Harbor?

**McCoy:**

Yes. We had a reason.

**Wilmot:**

Do you remember when that happened?

**McCoy:**

Yes I do, yes I do.

**Wilmot:**

Where were you?

**McCoy:**

I was in a peach orchard in the country picking peaches.

**Wilmot:**

In Texas?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

How did you hear?

**McCoy:**

There was a radio. We had radios. They said, "Oh the war, we're at war!" The president, Roosevelt, came on, and it was very disturbing. Then they said, "Now, we're at war, and we're going to be registering the men at the age of eighteen." It seemed like to me, in three months my oldest brother was gone. [noise in the background] There's my husband.

**Wilmot:**

You mean your oldest brother went to war?

**McCoy:**

Yes he did. The oldest brother went to war. [interruption]

**Wilmot:**

So what did your brother tell you about his wartime experiences?

**McCoy:**

My brother? My brother, this was World War II, I'd get a letter from him and he would say, "Pray for me, I don't have time to pray."

**Wilmot:**

Where was he?

**McCoy:**

Germany. He didn't fight, they didn't allow them to fight, they didn't want the blacks to fight in World War II. Until Truman stepped in and that's when the black soldiers had an opportunity to fight. They wanted to fight, but after that they got into it. That's the reason why those airplane, remember the airplane group? They really campaigned to get out there, to get in those planes, and get up there. Now, my grandson, I showed you his picture, he is into that. He wants to fly a plane.

**Wilmot:**

That history?

**McCoy:**

That's Rene, and he's into it heavy. He's 6'3" and I don't get to see him much because he goes to school, he plays football, and then he's into the air cadet thing.

**Wilmot:**

I wanted to ask you also, you were working at the printing company for fifteen years, how did you start to think about real estate? When did you get that?

**McCoy:**

They moved to Southern California. When they moved to Southern California I was one of the ones, one of that last ones that they laid off. I really wanted to go with them, but we were in a union, they wouldn't take us. Even, this was a company from Germany, even the company from Germany wanted me to go. I wanted to go, but they wouldn't take us because of the union. So the Ozelot Company is down there somewhere, it's in Harbrook {?}, California. Very interesting job.

**Wilmot:**

The thing that I stepped away from was asking about the Japanese and Pearl Harbor. I was wondering, did you and your friends, was there conversation about when the Japanese disappeared and went to internment camps?

**McCoy:**

We heard it in the news. Gable Header {?} at that time was one of the main speakers. He constantly talked about it, and that's the way we found out about it.

**Wilmot:**

Did you see, were there Japanese people who you had been friends with who suddenly disappeared?

**McCoy:**

No, I didn't see any of that. Didn't see any of it.

**Wilmot:**

But you remember—

**McCoy:**

I knew about it, I knew about it, yes.

**Wilmot:**

What were people saying about this? What were peoples' thoughts?

**McCoy:**

We were wondering because we didn't know that it was that many Japanese here. We really didn't know about it. When we found out about it, we wanted to know why they would do that to them. That's the question that was in their mind, why did they do that? Then the ones they took in service, and they let them go in service, but then they turned around and put them in encampment here.

01:01:00:00

**Wilmot:**

The war ended when the US—well, it was one of the—what did you hear about when the US dropped the atom bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima?

**McCoy:**

Oh that was terrible! We heard about that good, and they killed all those people. We also wondered, as a family, why did they do that? Why did they drop it on them like that? On the other hand, we thought about what they had done at Pearl Harbor, and said, "Oh well, that's the way they got them back." That's what lingered with us as a memory, what they did in Pearly Harbor, the United States got them back in Hiroshima.

**Wilmot:**

So it seemed like it was fair?

**McCoy:**

We took it as being fair.

**Wilmot:**

One thing you also said was you had come to the Bay Area, you had come to Oakland, on your way to New York. What kept you in the Bay Area? When did you decide to just be in the Bay Area and not go to New York?

**McCoy:**

Well, I wanted to work here long enough to get enough money to go. Okay, but after getting here I fell in love with it. Because when I got here I could get on the train and ride wherever I wanted to, sit wherever I wanted to. I'd go into stores, and was treated altogether different. Everything was so different. No discrimination. You go to the restaurants and eat—we couldn't do that where I came from. We couldn't do that at all. I got to where living on Market Street, I walked downtown. I'd do a lot of walking. And it rained every day in the winter time back then. I just—I fell in love with it. Then the New York thing kind of washed out of my mind. As I got older and found out more about New York then I didn't want to go.

**Wilmot:**

Have you ever been to New York?

**McCoy:**

No. I'm still not interested in going.

**Wilmot:**

I want to hear more about falling in love with the Bay Area and Oakland. After you—you said you first came, you lived off of Market in north Oakland. Where did you live subsequently, where did you live after that?

**McCoy:**

I lived on Union Street in west Oakland in a room. After that I lived on West Street, I got an apartment. Then I moved back to north Oakland right near where I was on Market Street and I was able to get a house. I lived there long enough where I had two of my children. Until I bought my first house, here in east Oakland. Now, it was very prejudiced in getting houses in east Oakland.

**Wilmot:**

Hold on one second, I'm going to switch this tape. This tape ended. Let's just stop, because I have to change all of these.

[start minidisc 2]

**Wilmot:**

Okay, you were telling me about how you bought your first home in east Oakland, and you said there was a lot of discrimination.

**McCoy:**

Yes. Were you through with the war?

**Wilmot:**

No. We can go back, just as a conversation.

**McCoy:**

Now I moved in a rental house. The first house I had was a rental house. That's what it was. Seven years later, before. I wanted to get my sister's life in there, the little life I had with her while she was here. After she got married, it was a year later. I didn't get to really be close, close with my sister like I was before she got married. We were very close. She told me, "He was so jealous, he don't want me to go nowhere." When he'd buy food—because she got laid off from the post office—she said, "He'd buy food for himself, he won't buy any for me." Then I noticed she was getting real small. Then she left and went with a friend, I think they went to Chicago or somewhere, they were gone for about three months. I told her while she was gone, I said, "Get your divorce." When she came back, I didn't know she had come back and she came back to him. It wasn't but a little while, he called me one morning, "You ought to come get your sister, she's out there laying on the ground." I said, "Laying on the ground?" "Yes, in the frost." I said, "What's wrong with her?" "I don't know." When I got there, she was hysterical, just laying on the ground, trembling. She said, "He gave me my breakfast—he gave me my breakfast and he said he's going to kill me if I get a divorce. I told him I'm going to get a divorce and he said, 'No you're not, you'll be in your grave.'" She kept repeating that. So we picked her up and brought her to where I lived. She was so afraid of him, we put her in the hospital, they couldn't figure out

what was wrong with her. Her stomach would just do like that and she'd go into—what do you call it, convulsions? Then finally we got an apartment where we could all live in an apartment together.

**Wilmot:**

You, your sister, and—just you and your sister together?

**McCoy:**

And her husband, and my husband. One night we went to the Bible class, she came back and she said, "I want to go home." She said, "Cecil came here." That was her husband. She said, "He came upstairs, I know it was him," she said, "and I know it was him, I know his footprints. I want to go home, back to Texas. So he won't know where I am, because he wants to kill me. I am going to get a divorce." So we took her and put her on the plane and sent her home. That's the last time I saw my sister walk. She suffered for another six months to no end. Nothing could help her. My aunt would go there. She lived alone, so she'd go down twice a week, and said my sister's stomach was still just shaking, she'd just tremble, to whatever she eat would go straight through her in blood. They couldn't find out, well, the doctors at the hospital there said, "Have you ever believed in—what do you call it—witchcraft?" He says, "That's what has happened to your sister. That's what has happened to her. Get a witchcraft person, see if you can help her." Okay. When she died she weighed sixty-two pounds. My sister said all of these worms came out, and blood, came out of her rectum. They said she went and got them all, brought them in the room to see what had happened. They carried them to the doctor, they said, "That's what had ate her intestines up." I got pregnant when I went to see her. When she first went down she got sick, sick, sick. So I left and went down there. When I got back I found out I was pregnant. On top of that, I was laid off the job. I had a good job, and I was laid off for six months. Then her husband put tools in my husband's car, out at the army base, and had—well, they search the car when you come out, and this box of army tools was in the car so they fired my husband. My husband said, "I didn't have these tools." He said, "Nobody did that but Cecil." So we both were out of work, and I couldn't go to see my sister at all no more. As I got further into pregnancy I wanted to go see my sister. The doctors said, "You can't go, because you're threatening to lose this baby. You're bleeding every month, you're threatening. You get on that plane, you're going to lose this baby." So my sister called for me and called for me and called for me. The day before she died, she told my brother, she said, "Oralee will get here today, I'm not going to be here tomorrow, she's not going to see me no more." So—she was twenty-five years old. I didn't see her no more. I haven't got over it yet. I haven't got over it yet. He married her so-called best friend. But he died fifteen years later. He died a young man too. I said, "Well, he had to think about what he did." And he went to Texas to see her, and I just found that out last year. A cousin said, "Yes, he came down here, and he came to my house and asked me to take him to where she was." He didn't know anything about what had happened. He took her there and he said, "When we walked in the room, he said," we called her Baby, that was her nickname, "She went into a seizure." He scared her that bad, she went into a seizure. I said, "Did you get to talk?" He said, "No. We didn't get to talk to her at all." I said, "What did he do?" He said, "We left." I didn't know he went down to see her. But it was a terrible thing and I will never get—I just can't get over it. Because we were too close, close sisters.

**Wilmot:**

I'm glad you got to have her for the time you got to have her.

**McCoy:**

Well, yes, but I wish I wouldn't have had her at all, to know what she went through, how she suffered, how she lived here. I had counseling for it, and all that. The last lady I had counseling with did help me, she said, "I want you to go to the beach and sit there by the water. I want you to bring your sister right up in the front of you and sit down and talk to her." She said, "It'll help you." It did. Then she told me, at her anniversary of her death, buy flowers. I have that in my office right now.

**Wilmot:**

And you named your daughter for her.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

A daughter who went on to become—

**McCoy:**

No, my daughter was born right after she died. That's the reason why I think—all of that is memory and I think about it, I said, "Well, the lord gave me somebody in her place." She looks so much like my—she looks. [interruption] I'll bring you a picture.

**Wilmot:**

Okay.

**McCoy:**

She looks very much like her there. That one was taken about two years ago.

**Wilmot:**

Stunning. And she went on to become Ms. Oakland, your daughter?

**McCoy:**

Yes. She's the one who broke the barrier for black girls, white ladies would be Ms. Oakland—for being Ms. California. Vanessa William was the first one. Then after many years.

**Wilmot:**

Well, I wanted to turn now to ask you how you got involved in real estate.

02:00:10:01

**McCoy:**

Okay, in 1959, when the company decided they were going to move south, okay, in the mean time I had started studying real estate in 1955 and got my license.

**Wilmot:**

How did you think to do that?

**McCoy:**

A gentleman who knew me quite well, he said, "McCoy, why don't you get your license and work part time with me?"

**Wilmot:**

Who was this?

**McCoy:**

Ray Collins.

**Wilmot:**

Ray Collins, okay.

**McCoy:**

So I did. I studied and got my license and worked part time with him. But when the company left, I went into real estate full time. I got my broker's license in 1962.

**Wilmot:**

Where did Ray Collins work?

**McCoy:**

At Eightieth and East Fourteenth.

**Wilmot:**

Eightieth Avenue, so he was out here.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

What areas did he tend to, buying and selling?

**McCoy:**

All of Oakland, Berkeley, and round about. We had spread it out like we spread it out now. It was a lot of prejudice, a lot of it. I never will forget, when I got my license and went into it full time. He had to go to Los Angeles, and I had five listings and out in Hayward where it was all white, I got three listings. I had to hold these houses open that Sunday and he was gone. I had my daughter with me, she was twelve years old. I said, "I'll tell you what, you stand on one house while I go show the other one." So some kids came out, so she said, "Mommy can I play with the kids while I'm there?" I said, "Yes." She hasn't forgot that. She went out to play with them, they were all white, little white girls. And they said, "We don't play with niggers." She's never forgot that. She came back crying. I said, "What's wrong, sugar? What's the matter?" She said, "Mamma, they said, 'We don't play with niggers,' am I a nigger?" I said, "No. You're not a nigger, but that's a nickname they call you." So, that's the way I got started in real estate and I sold two of those houses and had to figure out how to do those contracts, and Mr. Collins was in Los Angeles.

**Wilmot:**

Why real estate?

**McCoy:**

Why real estate?

**Wilmot:**

Yes, why did you decide that was the place for you to go?

**McCoy:**

He talked me into it and encouraged me to do it. And I'm glad I did.

**Wilmot:**

Why are you glad you did it?

**McCoy:**

Because it's been my food on the table and my bills paid.

**Wilmot:**

And when you say you had to figure out all those contracts by yourself, how did you learn how to do all that part of it?

**McCoy:**

Well, I had no choice, okay. One of the houses I had sold. I'm \$500 away from getting this contract signed. Now I can't lose this deal, this is my first deal. I stayed awake all night, I said, I know what, there is the buyer, seller, and real estate. I divided that \$500 three ways. I went back to him and I said, "Now, if you will pay this, I will pay this, and I will pay this, we will put the deal together." That's the way we put it together.

**Wilmot:**

You brought your own money into it.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

And were you, were there other young women also working in real estate at that time?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Who? Was it common?

**McCoy:**

It was more men then, and now it's more women.

**Wilmot:**

Were you ever made to feel—was there anything much made of the fact that you were a woman? Did you ever feel like you were excluded from certain circles?

**McCoy:**

No, I think it became very important because the big companies like Grubb and Ellis, and all of them, they would exclude us from their listings because they had the big listings. But as time went on Grubb and Ellis came to me. "I got a listing down in the flatlands, how do a I sell it?"

**Wilmot:**

Flatlands?

**McCoy:**

Yes. And I'd have to tell them how to sell it, because they're dealing with people with less money.

**Wilmot:**

So they were excluding black people or women?

**McCoy:**

Yes, yes, black people period.

**Wilmot:**

So what did you tell them about trying to sell in the flatlands?

**McCoy:**

I would tell them how, how it would sell in flatlands. But now, today, Grubb and Ellis and everybody will come here, knock on your door, "Would you like to sell your house?" They wouldn't dare to come in those days. That's when they had red-lining so badly. Red-lining so bad. They even had it on maps! They actually had the red line on maps where they would do financing for minorities. If it was below that they wouldn't do it.

**Wilmot:**

Did you see those maps?

**McCoy:**

Oh yes! They were made public. I had a time getting this house right here because it was all white.

**Wilmot:**

This neighborhood?

**McCoy:**

Yes. When I first tried I couldn't get it.

**Wilmot:**

What year did you buy this house?

**McCoy:**

1957.

**Wilmot:**

Was this your first house that you bought for yourself and your family?

**McCoy:**

No. The first house that I bought was on Seventy-first Avenue, a little hand-made job. It even had a hand-made kitchen and bath. That was my first house.

**Wilmot:**

How much did you pay for that house?

**McCoy:**

\$1500.

**Wilmot:**

\$1500. When you say you had a time getting this house because it was all white, how this neighborhood was all white. How did that work?

**McCoy:**

Well, I was the fifth person that bought in here. Blacks had broken in. Jones Realty—I don't know where they are now—but Jones Realty went around and put out the news, "The blacks,"—they didn't say "black"—whatever they called us then, "is buying in here, you better get out of here because you're property is going to go down." Signs went up everywhere.

**Wilmot:**

And Jones Realty was—was that African American? Did black people own that?

**McCoy:**

No, no, that was white. They were in San Leandro.

**Wilmot:**

It almost sounds as if they stood to benefit from the sale.

**McCoy:**

Oh they did, they did. They benefited a lot.

**Wilmot:**

They were the ones who sold in this area.

**McCoy:**

Right, right. This is who I bought mine from, Jones Realty.

**Wilmot:**

So they were making money. I want to just go back. You just said that big companies like Grubb and Ellis didn't know how to sell to people with low incomes, was there a trick to it? How did you kind of—

**McCoy:**

Well see, they worked with people with very—I'm sorry—they worked with people that was in the higher land and the more expensive property. Down in the flatland it had to be people with no down, GI, a little money down, and low prices, like \$12,000, that kind of thing. When I bought this house I paid \$12,000 for it. Right now this house is worth a little over four {\$400,000?}, okay? That's the way it went. So we got out in protest, carried signs in front of banks, downtown Oakland, all of that. I had an office on East Fourteenth, so when they asked me to come work at Golf Link, at the office where I am now, because the broker was dying and they needed a broker, so they searched around to find an honest broker and they asked me. Ray Collins, I said to Mr. Collins, "Should I go there?"

**Wilmot:**

Were you still working for Mr. Collins?

**McCoy:**

No, I was working for myself at that time. He said, "McCoy, you would be the person that could go up there and straighten that office out." I didn't realize that there was anything going on at that office. I did go, and it had a lot of straightening out to do, and I did it.

**Wilmot:**

Whose office is that one up there?

**McCoy:**

It was Bill Smith at that time. He did pass away. Now Joel Turell and myself on the office.

02:00:20:01

She's the one who asked me to come up and start. Because I had my broker's license, and she didn't have hers.

**Wilmot:**

How old were you—not old, but how long in the business when you started your own office? When did you leave Mr. Collins?

**McCoy:**

Mr. Collins?

**Wilmot:**

Yes, when did you leave his office?

**McCoy:**

Hmmm. My daughter was old enough to be my secretary. Oh gosh. I must have been in my sixties.

**Wilmot:**

So you worked with Ray Collins for a long time before that?

**McCoy:**

Yes I did.

**Wilmot:**

When you entered the business, what did the market look like? This was in 1955, was it very hot? Was there a lot of activity going on at that time?

**McCoy:**

Lots of activity, but rough for black people, very rough for black people. Because the white people wouldn't work with us, and a lot of the black people wouldn't work with us, said because they didn't think we knew what we were doing, because there wasn't a lot of black people in real estate.

**Wilmot:**

So you're saying that people, when they wanted to buy and sell houses, they would go to white realtors?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Wow. Were there white realtors who worked especially with black people?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Who were they?

**McCoy:**

Oh any of the—oh, you had more white people in real estate than had offices. You could count the black offices on one hand, in the Bay Area.

**Wilmot:**

There was Collins, S.B. Odell.

**McCoy:**

Burgis Smith.

**Wilmot:**

There was a woman in Richmond. I forgot her name as well.

**McCoy:**

They're all dead. The only ones living is Burgis Smith—I don't know another one living, right at this time, that was into real estate. I know some black, I've found some black people that's my age but they were working, they're working for white people now, they're working in white offices.

**Wilmot:**

How did the black realtors begin to create business?

**McCoy:**

We really had to protest and have meetings and fight to get into the realtors.

**Wilmot:**

What did that look like? Were you a realtist or a realtor, by the way?

**McCoy:**

We weren't anything at that time. We finally—Ray Collins was the first one got into the realtors. I was the second, the first one to get into the Sacramento board, which was out in Hayward and that way. I was the first one, because Ray Collin helped me get there.

**Wilmot:**

How did he help you?

**McCoy:**

By pushing and leading the way for me to get in. Because Ray Collins became very popular after he got into the board.

**Wilmot:**

What was he like?

**McCoy:**

Wonderful person, wonderful person. He's deceased now.

**Wilmot:**

Where did he live?

**McCoy:**

Ray Collins lived up on—he lived just about MacArthur. He's been a very, very prosperous person.

**Wilmot:**

So he started his business, did he start it right after the war, or during the war?

**McCoy:**

After the war.

**Wilmot:**

And what do you think was the most important thing you learned from him? Because he was your mentor, essentially.

**McCoy:**

He was the mentor for all of the black agents at that time, they all came through Ray Collins. He was just that smart.

**Wilmot:**

What was the most important lesson you learned from him about selling and buying houses as a realtor?

**McCoy:**

Don't judge a person by his look.

**Wilmot:**

What's that mean?

**McCoy:**

One day a man came in there in raggedy overalls, just as raggedy as he could be, and here we were all sitting and none of us would wait on him. He said he wanted to buy a house. So we called Mr. Collins out of his office, out of the back. He went in there and waited on the man, the man had cash money, paid cash for a house. He said, "All money is green." That's the way Ray put it. All raggedy houses is green money. He said, "All little houses will keep bread on the table." That's what he taught us.

**Wilmot:**

Where did he sell? What were his areas? All over, you said?

**McCoy:**

Yes, all over east Oakland, Berkeley, San Leandro and Hayward. That's about where he traveled to.

**Wilmot:**

Did he sell mostly in the flatlands or did he sell—

**McCoy:**

That's all the charge we had. Once in a while you may get one in the hills. That was very rare.

**Wilmot:**

Who else worked in the office with you? Was it other young women?

**McCoy:**

Oh yes. Ruby Daniels, she's dead; Estell Williams, she's dead; Higgins, he's dead. The other gentleman, I can't think of it, but he's dead. We had an office full of people, but they're all dead.

**Wilmot:**

You were selling all over the East Bay?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Who were you selling to?

**McCoy:**

Black folks whenever we found them.

**Wilmot:**

Were most people that you were selling to, were they mostly people who came from the South, or were they people who were from the Bay Area?

**McCoy:**

They were from the Bay Area. There wasn't that many people coming from the South that came in to buy. The people that came from the South at that time didn't have that much money.

**Wilmot:**

In the 1950s.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

What about right after the war? Were there a lot of people who—

**McCoy:**

Yes, well, people started coming. As the year went on, more people came. Right now, more black people are drifting back to the South.

**Wilmot:**

Sure. Did people who were in the Bay Area, had been there for a while, had they owned houses before? Were they people who had owned houses before, either in the Bay Area or in the South?

**McCoy:**

A few of the black people owned houses, but not a lot of them. Most of them was rentals. Rented houses.

**Wilmot:**

So you were doing a lot of first time home ownership, first time homebuyers. You were selling to a lot of first-time homebuyers?

**McCoy:**

Oh yes. Well, wasn't a lot of them because we didn't sell that many at that time. You did good if you sold one or two houses a year.

**Wilmot:**

What would you do with the rest of the time?

**McCoy:**

Working. Working. I was working.

**Wilmot:**

So you were working in the real estate office the same time you were with the printing company?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

I see, you were doing both.

**McCoy:**

I didn't go to work at full time until 1959.

**Wilmot:**

Okay, and that wasn't when you got your own office, that was when you were still working with Mr. Collins?

**McCoy:**

Ray Collins, yes.

**Wilmot:**

Where was Ray Collins from? Was he from the Bay?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Or was he from someplace else?

**McCoy:**

He was from the South. I can't remember where Collins was from. I think he was from the South.

**Wilmot:**

Do you know when he came up here? He came probably during the war, do you think?

**McCoy:**

I would think so. I would think so.

**Wilmot:**

In the 1950s you were selling—oh, the sun is coming in—in the 1950s you were selling. In terms of, when you first entered the market in the early 1950s, who lived where, by ethnic composition?

**McCoy:**

The black folks lived below East Fourteenth. Very few lived above East Fourteenth, because you couldn't hardly find a house where the white person would sell to a black.

**Wilmot:**

So everybody lived below East Fourteenth?

**McCoy:**

Mostly, and west Oakland. West Oakland was covered with black people.

02:00:30:03

**Wilmot:**

That's so different, because in my lifetime, the line of demarcation was MacArthur, so this really shifted.

**McCoy:**

Mm-hmm.

**Wilmot:**

It's really shifted a great deal.

**McCoy:**

It shifted.

**Wilmot:**

And now it's shifting, now it's changing again.

**McCoy:**

Yes. Now west Oakland is changing tremendously. Because the other race of people are pushing to get into west Oakland.

**Wilmot:**

The white people.

**McCoy:**

West Oakland is turning to be gold; I'll put it that way. Now east Oakland period is turning to be gold. The only negative thing we have in Oakland is young people and drugs.

**Wilmot:**

You mentioned that you became part of the Sacramento board. Is that right?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

What did that mean for your business, and what year was that?

**McCoy:**

1966. I have a plaque in my office. That meant an awful lot. Because we could work in the board in that area, and they couldn't discriminate. There was no discrimination allowed then.

**Wilmot:**

What did discrimination look like, in terms of your professional opportunities?

**McCoy:**

At that time it was very very bad, because here's the way they would do it. A house would come on the market and they would say the house is sold. It wasn't sold. San Leandro is still like that right now, but not as bad. Prices are bigger.

**Wilmot:**

How did you get around that?

**McCoy:**

Well you couldn't get around that. If they told you, if that broker told you, "The house is sold," how are you going to—what are you going to do? You couldn't get in. But now if they pull that, they have a way, and the way the board is set up you can have an investigation. If they find out what the truth is about that investigation they will be charged.

**Wilmot:**

At that time, in terms of lending and getting financing together for deals that were coming through, you mentioned the red-lining, you mentioned that there—sorry.

**McCoy:**

The red-lining was more than just the map showing the red line. When they took the application, it had on there you're black, white, whatever. They had that on the applications. They can't have that now. They may have it in some cases, but they can't have that and use that now. Because if they found out you were black you were automatically turned down for a loan.

**Wilmot:**

Did you—were there alternative sources of funding at that time?

**McCoy:**

No, it was very rough.

**Wilmot:**

I've heard of, for example, Transbay Savings and Loan, which was, I think, a black-owned savings and loan which provided mortgages for a short time.

**McCoy:**

It was some, but it was very few. Bank of America was one of the very worst, and now they are trying to be one of the best, to show the broad structure of service.

**Wilmot:**

Who did you have good relations, what lenders did you have good relationships with?

**McCoy:**

What lenders did I have good relationships with at that time?

**Wilmot:**

In order to, say, you had someone who wanted to buy and they had some amount they needed to get a mortgage, who would you send them to?

**McCoy:**

Country-wide was one. Country-wide had some black employees. Let's see now, who else would be? Veteran's Administration and the FHA.

**Wilmot:**

Both VA and FHA you found to be fair?

**McCoy:**

Yes, that was our main source. Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Was there someone you worked with in particular? A loan agent?

**McCoy:**

No, not a particular loan agent. It would be FHA and VA administration. Then they would refer you to the loans.

**Wilmot:**

They would guarantee them, underwrite them, and then there would be people who would be willing to loan.

**McCoy:**

Right.

**Wilmot:**

I understand. As a result of the guarantee.

**McCoy:**

Right.

**Wilmot:**

I've heard stories from different people, from Edith, and from Viola [Taylor] Wims?

**McCoy:**

Oh yes! Viola, yes! That's one still alive.

**Wilmot:**

I've heard stories from them about how they had to kind of be very crafty in terms of getting loans.

**McCoy:**

That's right.

**Wilmot:**

And how they, they would kind of smooth a loan out of a situation where the loan wasn't really available to black people?

**McCoy:**

Right, right.

**Wilmot:**

So was that ever—did you ever kind of employ craft to get these?

**McCoy:**

Yes, yes, we had to do that.

**Wilmot:**

What did that mean? Do you have any stories that are coming to mind?

**McCoy:**

You had to smooth your way through. You couldn't come out and say, "Well these are black people." You could constantly, "These are people that I know that they qualify," and they had to qualify more in the form of getting a loan than the other people. Many times we had people qualify in the blacks on getting a home and that white person would get it. A lot of times when they had homes on the market, if they found out a black was buying it, they would back off the market and say it's not for sale now.

**Wilmot:**

These are brokers or the home owners?

**McCoy:**

Home owners. Even the brokers would cooperate with the sellers.

**Wilmot:**

Even if they were black? Or they wouldn't be black.

**McCoy:**

No, they wouldn't be black.

**Wilmot:**

Yes, Okay.

**McCoy:**

It has been very rough in real estate. But I would say in the last fifteen years it has really let up. Now where I am, on Golf Links Road, fifteen years ago that was all white. Now all of those beautiful homes and everything, those are blacks now. You have some whites there, but they are moving out. It's a true thing, regardless to how well you train, how much education you have, how much knowledge and how good a family you are, you will find white people will not live among black people very long.

**Wilmot:**

To this day?

**McCoy:**

To this day. Now if it's one family, or two families moves into that community that's fine. But if they continue to change, you constantly see signs gradually going up.

**Wilmot:**

You see now also in Oakland, much of Oakland is becoming Mexican American.

**McCoy:**  
Right.

**Wilmot:**  
Much of east Oakland, I would say almost half. I'm wondering how that changes the business that you do, or does it change the work that you do at all?

**McCoy:**  
Not really. You find the Mexican people work much harder to get where they are. They improve property better than black people. I'm going to tell you the truth, this is the truth. They improve property much better than black people does. Simply the reason why, they will take a group and pool their money together and be able to do this.

**Wilmot:**  
Which is pretty much the only way to buy a house in the Bay Area right now.

**McCoy:**  
It is.

**Wilmot:**  
I also wanted to ask you. In 1963 that Rumford Fair Housing Act passed. Did that change the work?

**McCoy:**  
Yes it does.

**Wilmot:**  
Or was it sort of something that happened at the legal level and didn't really have impact at the day to day level?

**McCoy:**  
That happened at the legal level and it gradually worked through into the communities.

**Wilmot:**  
Do you have any stories that come to mind around that? Where it suddenly became, the housing covenants, for example, you know how there were covenants all through parts of Temescal, and Trestle Glen, and I'm not sure where all the housing covenants were, the racial ones—

02:00:40:08

**McCoy:**  
We got on top of that. CC&R, you know what that is?

**Wilmot:**  
No.

**McCoy:**  
That's a paragraph in the preliminary report saying, "We do not sell to:" we got rid of that. We worked to get rid of that, we got rid of it. That cannot be in a preliminary report. Now if it's there, it's obsolete.

**Wilmot:**

What year did you—

**McCoy:**

Oh I don't know. I don't know what year we're at, but that was quite some time ago. Had to get rid of that.

**Wilmot:**

And when you say, "We worked on that," who was we?

**McCoy:**

Black folks.

**Wilmot:**

Okay.

**McCoy:**

Black realtors.

**Wilmot:**

Were you part of a group of people working on that?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

And did that include, for example, Collins?

**McCoy:**

Yes. It was so hard for us to even work with the realtors until we started a realtist, and it's getting big.

**Wilmot:**

Yes, I remember, I've heard about it.

**McCoy:**

We started the realtists and now the realtists is getting big. I believe they're going to outgrow the realtors. Because when we went to Chicago last year, I wish you would have seen all the black people there from all over the United States at that convention. It was great. Absolutely great. Few white people there, and I'm sure the news got around. So now we have conventions where we go after these lenders, all of them, so they are coming in with us now. And working with us. I know what they are saying, "We'd better get with them or we're going to be left out."

**Wilmot:**

What do you consider the hottest—well, I want to go back to this. You were working with a group of people that became the realtists. Can you tell me a little bit more about that group of people? Like, who became the realtists, and what kind of work, what kind of advocacy you were doing?

**McCoy:**

The realists were the purpose of the black people getting housing and funding. That's what we went after and we went after it heavy and hard. We have accomplished—getting those lenders, okay? And getting housing. We are even accomplishing where the building houses and construction—all of that now. The realtors has stepped in and are working at it. Now, just this next month, we will be down in west Oakland volunteering in Habitat, in building houses, and having owners coming and help build the houses. All of this came through the realtors.

**Wilmot:**

The realists or the realtors?

**McCoy:**

The realists.

**Wilmot:**

When did you join the realists? Do you remember.

**McCoy:**

Fifty-five.

**Wilmot:**

You were fifty-five when you joined?

**McCoy:**

Yes. At fifty-five, realists, when they started, was more or less a social thing, going places and doing things. But as time [went] on they really got into business. Now it's really into business. With scholarships and all of that. And with constantly putting on big things, not little things.

**Wilmot:**

Did you hold office in the realists?

**McCoy:**

No, I never did, no.

**Wilmot:**

I asked you this question about being a woman in real estate, early on in the 1950s, and I wanted to know, was there ever a time that you felt like, as a woman you didn't get certain types of work, or you did get certain types of work? People looked at you differently?

**McCoy:**

Oh yes. There was more of that than anything else.

**Wilmot:**

What do you mean?

**McCoy:**

You didn't get the work!

**Wilmot:**

They would prefer to give it to a man?

**McCoy:**

Not so much as a man, but as a race.

**Wilmot:**

Okay.

**McCoy:**

As a race.

**Wilmot:**

I think, what was the other question I had for you? It'll come back to me, one second please. Was your husband comfortable with you working? Is that a funny question?

**McCoy:**

No. No.

**Wilmot:**

And I'm referring to your first husband.

**McCoy:**

I lost my other husband in the, working in real estate. He would be gone, I would be gone. So he got up and green grass {?}.

**Wilmot:**

How come?

**McCoy:**

You understand what that is?

**Wilmot:**

Mm-hmm.

**McCoy:**

Okay. So I lost him. And I met this husband I have now in real estate. I got him into real estate but he couldn't handle it. He couldn't handle me being the broker and he being an agent. He couldn't handle that, so he got out.

**Wilmot:**

So there are some dynamics that are there that would be hard on a relationship.

**McCoy:**

Yes. That's the reason why when agents come in my office, I school them on that, men and women. "How are you if you are a couple? What is your relationship with each other, to work in real estate? Because there are going to be times that you're going to be wondering. How are you with that?" Now my husband's very comfortable with that because I bring a check! [laughter]

**Wilmot:**

That makes sense. How have you watched this neighborhood change over the years?

**McCoy:**

This one?

**Wilmot:**

Mm-hmm.

**McCoy:**

Believe me, it has completely changed.

**Wilmot:**

What do you call this neighborhood, for the camera?

**McCoy:**

For the camera? Sobrante Park.

**Wilmot:**

Sobrante Park.

**McCoy:**

And I tell them it's nice houses, very nice houses, but you have problems. It's all—used to be all black but not anymore. It's the fastest selling neighborhood in Oakland, right here. I sold my house down the street in one day. And I wrote a book, no, I wrote my thesis in Merritt College about Oakland. I ask them to give me a copy of it back and I made a B on it. They didn't. I stated, this was in 1976, I stated that from Seventy-third out to 105<sup>th</sup>, out to Oakland airport would be the new city of Oakland. Downtown Oakland would never draw the people back downtown to shop. And that's true, it came true. It would be diversified shopping centers, and we have that. So, those things that came true, a lot of people said, "Are you a fortune teller?" I said, "No, I did environment impact on Oakland." I also stated the west Oakland would become to be one of the top center areas because it's right in the middle of San Francisco and Oakland where transportation is centered. That is happening.

**Wilmot:**

It is happening, you predicted that. I want to ask you a little bit about Richmond. Do you sell in Richmond? Have you sold in Richmond?

**McCoy:**

Yes I have.

**Wilmot:**

When did you enter Richmond's market? And did you ever live in Richmond?

**McCoy:**

No.

**Wilmot:**

When did you first start selling over there?

02:00:50:01

**McCoy:**

You know, I really can't remember. I hadn't given that a thought. I haven't sold a lot in Richmond, but I have sold in Richmond. I can remember when Richmond was really a down, down city. It really was. Wasn't much going on in Richmond. I can remember that.

**Wilmot:**

When was that?

**McCoy:**

Back in the fifties. Forties.

**Wilmot:**

Right after the war?

**McCoy:**

Yes. Richmond started building up about, I guess in the late sixties.

**Wilmot:**

And were you over there at that time? Were you buying and selling over there?

**McCoy:**

Yes, I'd sell here and there over there. Not a lot.

**Wilmot:**

Okay. Do you remember what neighborhoods you were selling in?

**McCoy:**

I sold all around in Richmond, when I did sell. Yes. Because some of Richmond is called incorporation, incorporated area.

**Wilmot:**

Yes, some of it was incorporated and some was unincorporated.

**McCoy:**

Yes. I sold some and then I remember quite well some of the difficulties we had in getting closure because of the unincorporated.

**Wilmot:**

Because it wasn't really part of the city proper?

**McCoy:**

Right.

**Wilmot:**

Was this like kind of rural area?

**McCoy:**

No. The taxes was different.

**Wilmot:**

Mm-hmm. And were you selling to black people or selling property that was owned by black people?

**McCoy:**

I was selling to black people. I don't know if all of it was owned by black people.

**Wilmot:**

Were these new homes?

**McCoy:**

No, they were all old stuff. I didn't sell any new stuff.

**Wilmot:**

Did you ever sell in the area called Point Richmond?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

You did.

**McCoy:**

Yes I did.

**Wilmot:**

Isn't it beautiful there?

**McCoy:**

Yes it is. I've sold in there.

**Wilmot:**

Did you have a perspective on what was going on in Richmond during the war and after the war?

**McCoy:**

Yes. A lot was going on in Richmond, because I went to church there from '52 until '94.

**Wilmot:**

What church did you go to?

**McCoy:**

Church of Christ on Florida.

**Wilmot:**

On Florida. Which one do you belong to now?

**McCoy:**

The same one. Church of Christ.

**Wilmot:**

But it moved?

**McCoy:**

No.

**Wilmot:**

It's still in Richmond?

**McCoy:**

Yes. But I go to the one in San Francisco because I work with the homeless, Fresh Start.

**Wilmot:**

So this one in Richmond that you went to, Church of Christ on Florida, what denomination is it?

**McCoy:**

No denomination. Church of Christ is not a denomination. They have no name. It's just the Church of Christ, and we do a cappella singing. Let's see, trying to think of somebody, do you remember the Wings over Jordan? Have you heard of it? A cappella singers, the best that ever were. Only one is living now. That was Church of Christ.

**Wilmot:**

And who was the pastor there?

**McCoy:**

Oh, I don't know. We don't call our ministers "pastor" we call them by their names.

**Wilmot:**

Okay. Different.

**McCoy:**

It's completely different. We use the Bible and just the Bible. We don't use music. No jumping, shouting or all of that stuff.

**Wilmot:**

Just a cappella singing?

**McCoy:**

Yes. And use the Bible.

**Wilmot:**

You were in Richmond every week then at that time.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Through that whole time.

**McCoy:**

Right.

**Wilmot:**

I think we're winding down now. I wanted to ask you, you said you went back to school, you went to Merritt.

**McCoy:**

I went to school when I first came here. I first went to school taking typing. Then I turned around and went to school for nursing, got my practical license and never used it.

**Wilmot:**

Wow.

**McCoy:**

Never stopped going to school.

**Wilmot:**

You were busy.

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

You came here, you were working two jobs and going to school, and raising a family.

**McCoy:**

[laughter] Yes.

**Wilmot:**

And buying and selling houses.

**McCoy:**

I still do that! I'm a very busy person. I don't know when I've set this long. Because as soon as you leave, off I go, because I've got something to do. [laughter]

**Wilmot:**

What else do you think is important for people to know about either your real estate work or your life in general?

**McCoy:**

My life in general, the very important part, is people learn to love and deal with children. Small children now, because it's too late for teenagers. People learn to work with children, whether

their children or somebody else children. Learn to show those children love. This will make a difference in our generation that's coming on. Because this generation now it's too late. That's where I am.

**Wilmot:**

That's beautiful. Anything else you want to say today?

**McCoy:**

I am just thankful to be alive at eighty-three and doing all the things I'm doing. I give exercise to about forty-three people at that big senior center on Ninety-fifth. Very important. People don't know what it means to take exercise. Retirement is the worst thing you can do, because retirement, you sit and you deteriorate. Keep the body busy and the muscles working, and you'll see that life will be much more beautiful because you're keeping the mind busy. Okay? Television's okay here and there, but don't let it become a part of you and take over you. Because life is very important and it has a lot to offer, and everybody has an important life if they use it.

**Wilmot:**

Okay. Well, I think that's it for today, so I'm going to close. Is that all right?

**McCoy:**

Yes.

**Wilmot:**

Thank you, thank you very much.

**McCoy:**

Alright. I'm writing a book and it's quite interesting! One day I called my granddaughter reading my book, I said—

[End of interview]