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University of California
Berkeley, California

Jamie and Louise Voornies

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 2006

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Discursive Table of Contents—John A. Vincent

Audiofile 1

Richmond during World War 2—the yacht club started in 1933—John was still at the University of Berkeley when the club began—discussed their annual dinner in 1939 which was to get people involved in PR activity—the first shipyard was made in Richmond call the Todd Operation—after 1941 there were four shipyards—in order to sail people had to register their boat with the Coast Guard—security measure that were taken in place during World War 2 in Richmond—discussed how Homeland Security sent the Japanese to camps—remembers the attack on Pearl Harbor—became a block warden—recalls Richmond before World War 2—describes how overcrowded it became—involved with the lubricant for launching ships—explained how hard it was to figure out how to make a rush inhibiting turbine oil

Audiofile 2

Working lifestyle—had different types of service and testing for getting products on the market in the Los Angeles area—he stayed later his whole career in Chevron—after he went to San Francisco in 1946 as the product engineer department—remembers Richmond to be a place where he can remember different projects take place-- likes the Rosie the Riveter—puts his opinion on what Richmond's future will be like—and concludes on talking about his family and kids

Interview 1: May 31, 2006
Begin Audio File voornies 1.mp3

01-00:00:00

Wilmot: Good morning.

01-00:00:03

Louise. Voorhies: Speak up.

01-00:00:03

Wilmot: Okay, I will. And just let me know if you need me to talk louder.

01-00:00:06

L. Voorhies: Yeah.

01-00:00:07

Jamie Voorhies: Yeah.

01-00:00:07

L. Voorhies: About that tone or a little more will be fine.

01-00:00:10

Wilmot: Okay. Sounds good. Let's see. Just to begin, Jamie, Mr. Voorhies—[almost shouting]

01-00:00:20

J. Voorhies: Yes!

01-00:00:20

Wilmot: —can you tell me, where were you born? And tell me a little bit about your family.

01-00:00:25

J. Voorhies: Well, I was born on a farm in Antelope County, Nebraska, in 1918, a couple of miles from where my dad was born. My grandfather was a homesteader. And I graduated from high school in '35. I had just turned 17. It was during the height of the Depression, and it was drought years that we had in Nebraska. And my folks took me to Denver. And I stayed with an aunt until I got a job. Then I met her. [gesturing to Louise] And after—what, a year-and-a-half?—we got married. And our first son was born there. So I was working in a grocery store. And then I went, worked in a supermarket. And I had been going to a welding school. There was a lady who bequeathed money to teach trades, called opportunity school. And they taught a lot of things: bookkeeping and typing and welding and a lot of crafts. And I went there for a while, and then I met her. And, of course, that kind of threw that to one side.

01-00:01:47

Wilmot: You decided not to be a welder at that time?

01-00:01:48

J. Voorhies: [laughs] Yeah. That was in 1938.

- 01-00:01:52
Wilmot: Okay. And this was in Denver?
- 01-00:01:54
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 01-00:01:55
Wilmot: And can you just tell me, Mr. Voorhies, where was your family from?
- 01-00:02:02
J. Voorhies: What —?
- 01-00:02:02
L. Voorhies: My family? No, his family.
- 01-00:02:05
J. Voorhies: My family?
- 01-00:02:05
Wilmot: Mmm hmm.
- 01-00:02:06
J. Voorhies: We belong to the Society of Genealogy for the family. And Voorhies came here in 1660.
- 01-00:02:15
Wilmot: From?
- 01-00:02:16
J. Voorhies: From Holland, from Netherlands. And so that was quite a while ago. He was here four years before the British took over New Amsterdam, or what became New York. And they settled in Long Island. And then, of course, they spread to New Jersey and New York and Pennsylvania. And my great-grandfather came from Pennsylvania to Iowa. And my grandfather was born in Marshalltown, Iowa, in 1855. And then he eventually—after he was married a little while and had one child, they moved to a homestead in Nebraska. And that's where my dad and his seven siblings were born. Well, six. One was born in Iowa. And so we date back quite a while. Not that there's much Dutch left in us! [laughs] Because of all these years of intermarriages of every description, you know. But we kind of think we're Dutch, a little bit
- 01-00:03:35
L. Voorhies: [chuckles]
- 01-00:03:36
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 01-00:03:37
Wilmot: Where's your mom from?

- 01-00:03:39
J. Voorhies: My mom was born in Nebraska. But her parents came from Galesburg, Illinois. My grandfather, her father, was a businessman and at one time was quite well to do. And he lost quite a bit of money in investments during the years. But he had a hardware store in Nealy, Nebraska. And he had all kinds of things besides hardware: harness shop and implements and plumbing and all kinds of things. And so that's where Mom was from. And she had, what, three sisters and one brother?
- 01-00:04:33
L. Voorhies: I think. Yes.
- 01-00:04:35
J. Voorhies: And my dad had seven sisters and brothers.
- 01-00:04:38
Wilmot: A lot of sisters and brothers!
- 01-00:04:40
J. Voorhies: Yeah. We had a big family. And when I grew up all our family was close together. That is, so I knew them all. Both sets of grandparents I knew well. And my grandfather on my dad's side passed away in '46. And Grandmother a couple of years earlier. And then my mother's parents died about that time too. But Granddad Voorhies was just short of 90. And so there's kind of a family joke that why we live so long is because we chose our grandparents.
- 01-00:05:22
L. Voorhies: [chuckles]
- 01-00:05:23
J. Voorhies: Which is kind of true.
- 01-00:05:25
L. Voorhies: We both have longevity in the families.
- 01-00:05:27
J. Voorhies: Yeah. It's just luck, too —
- 01-00:05:28
L. Voorhies: And I think it does show.
- 01-00:05:31
J. Voorhies: —a lot of luck. Boy. Yeah.
- 01-00:05:34
Wilmot: So, Mr. Voorhies, can you just tell me our parents' names? The names of your parents. Your mom and dad? Their names.
- 01-00:05:45
L. Voorhies: What's your parent's name? [to Jamie]

- 01-00:05:47
J. Voorhies: Name?
- 01-00:05:48
L. Voorhies: Your parent's name.
- 01-00:05:49
J. Voorhies: My dad's name was Wilson Alfred Voorhies. And my mother was Bess Viola Housh.
- 01-00:05:58
Wilmot: Last name again?
- 01-00:06:00
L. Voorhies: Housh.
- 01-00:06:01
J. Voorhies: Housh, H-O-U-S-H —
- 01-00:06:03
Wilmot: What type—?
- 01-00:06:04
J. Voorhies: —which is an unusual name.
- 01-00:06:06
L. Voorhies: Unh huh.
- 01-00:06:06
J. Voorhies: And my mother was the youngest of all of that family. She was the baby. And was spoiled, really.
- 01-00:06:17
L. Voorhies: [chuckles]
- 01-00:06:17
J. Voorhies: She never would admit this. But Mom lived to be almost 90, I mean, almost 100.
- 01-00:06:21
L. Voorhies: A hundred.
- 01-00:06:24
J. Voorhies: And she lived alone after my father passed away. She lived alone for, oh, my goodness—what?—20 years almost.
- 01-00:06:32
L. Voorhies: She lived alone for about 18 1/2 years, and then came here and lived with us for her last year-and-a-half with us.
- 01-00:06:43
J. Voorhies: Yeah.

- 01-00:06:43
L. Voorhies: And she was 98 years and five months when she passed away.
- 01-00:06:50
J. Voorhies: My dad was the youngest in his family to pass away. And he was the only one that smoked. And I smoked until 1963. And Dad passed away in '62. And that kind of —
- 01-00:07:09
L. Voorhies: He died of a heart attack, basically—
- 01-00:07:11
J. Voorhies: Had a heart problem —
- 01-00:07:11
L. Voorhies: —heart problems.
- 01-00:07:12
J. Voorhies: —and high blood pressure and a lot of things. And that kind of made me think about it a little bit, and I finally quit. Yeah.
- 01-00:07:21
Wilmot: Were your families farmers? Did you come from a farming family?
- 01-00:07:27
J. Voorhies: Yeah! Oh, yeah. My dad was a farmer. And, of course, his dad was a farmer.
- 01-00:07:32
Wilmot: What did you grow? What did you grow?
- 01-00:07:35
L. Voorhies: What did you grow? [to Jamie]
- 01-00:07:36
J. Voorhies: Oh! Oh, well, they were all quarter-section farms in Nebraska, virtually. And you raised small grain and corn. Because you used horses, so you had to feed the horses. So you raised oats. You fed the hogs barley, and ground barley and corn. So farmers, at that time, were pretty well self-sufficient. They had to be. My grandfather did everything, as a homesteader. I mean, literally. He cobbled shoes and made harnesses, and all kinds of things. Because he started in in 18—I think he came to Nebraska in 1878.
- 01-00:08:28
Wilmot: Were there any Indians left there —
- 01-00:08:31
L. Voorhies: No. No.
- 01-00:08:31
Wilmot: —when you were there?

- 01-00:08:32
 L. Voorhies: No Indians.
- 01-00:08:34
 J. Voorhies: No. At Orchard, the town where I lived and my brother still lives—there's a Santee Indian reservation about 45 or 50 miles from there. And that's the only Indians that I knew, not—and they played basketball when I was in high school, well, they played a little bit. But there was no way of knowing how old the Indians were, you know. [chuckles] And, boy, they beat us every time. And some of those kids must have—were supposed to have been in high school, but some of them must have been 25 years old. And in that little town I went to high school in, my brother still lives there. And it's 500, population. It's a village. And so I remember, growing up, I wanted to go to the mountains someday. Well, of course, we went to the Black Hills in South Dakota. And when I went to Colorado, I saw mountains. And when I was in Colorado I said, "Boy, I want to see an ocean!"
- 01-00:09:46
 L. Voorhies: [chuckles]
- 01-00:09:46
 J. Voorhies: So we've been very fortunate. We've traveled a little, and a lot more than most people.
- 01-00:09:56
 Wilmot: It's okay. You can continue. [referring to camera recording problems] We're just recording on the minidisk right now. It's just fine. You can continue talking.
- 01-00:10:05
 L. Voorhies: Go ahead and talk. [to her husband]
- 01-00:10:06
 J. Voorhies: Oh. We've been extremely fortunate. Life is a lot of luck. And when we came out here I was the only one of the—when Kaiser came to the welding school and hired us, there were five of us came out. I was the only one that had a car that we thought we could get out here on. But they hired us in Denver, to go to work here in the shipyards. Or we would never have come here, if it hadn't been for that, probably. And they didn't promise us anything except that they would help us find a place to live. Which they did. And we stayed in a rooming house, one of the men and I, in Alameda, until we opened up—until they opened up a dormitory in Richmond, which was not far from where Kaiser Field Hospital was. You know where that is.
- 01-00:11:12
 Wilmot: Mmm hmm.
- 01-00:11:13
 J. Voorhies: Well, behind that, they built dormitories. Well, Norm and I got one of those rooms, and we lived there for a little while. And I had applied for an

apartment. And we weren't one of the first, but we got an apartment on 16th and Cutting. And there were three houses, and we were the last ones away from Cutting. And I never remember the name of that street name.

01-00:11:44

L. Voorhies: I can't remember it right now.

01-00:11:46

J. Voorhies: And the only thing that I can really remember about any difficulties, if they were such, was, when we first came here, we were totally lost. Because we didn't know anything about the area. And, of course, everything was so immense and so big to us that—I remember going down, the first night, in the shipyards. They let us down into the basins. You know the—and you're acquainted with Yard 3—and they took us down into the bottom of the basins. And, my gosh, I had never seen anything like a ship. And I couldn't believe anything that big, you know. And I took every test that they would give us. And I became a journeyman within about two weeks because I had a lot of schooling. Then I took—I didn't like welding the plate, so I took a test as soon as it was available, to be a pipe welder. I passed that and became a pipe welder. And that paid ten cents an hour more. And because I started out at \$1.19 or \$1.20, and so then it got to be \$1.30 and a fraction.

01-00:13:25

L. Voorhies: That was big wages for him then.

01-00:13:27

J. Voorhies: That was big wages.

01-00:13:28

Wilmot: Was that the most you'd ever made?

01-00:13:30

L. Voorhies: In his life, yes.

01-00:13:32

Wilmot: Yeah.

01-00:13:32

L. Voorhies: When he came here that was the most he'd ever made in his life.

01-00:13:35

J. Voorhies: Oh, Lord, yes. I can tell you I was union in a supermarket, and I made \$32 a week. And this was for—hmm, what was it, five-and-a-half days, wasn't it? [to Louise]

01-00:13:55

L. Voorhies: Five-and-a-half days.

- 01-00:13:56
 J. Voorhies: Prior to that, when we got married, I was making \$15 a week working in a grocery store and she was making \$12 a week working at Montgomery Ward's in an office.—
- 01-00:14:01
 L. Voorhies: [chuckles]
- 01-00:14:07
 Wilmot: In Richmond or Denver?
- 01-00:14:09
 L. Voorhies: In Denver.
- 01-00:14:10
 Wilmot: In Denver. Okay. I want to go back a couple questions. First off, can you tell me —? You said you were highly schooled. You said you had lots of education. Can you talk about your education?
- 01-00:14:26
 J. Voorhies: Well, I graduated from high school and I had—without bragging, I had very good grades. And I was eligible to go to the University of Nebraska. But we had no money. And that's why I didn't go to school. And probably I was real lucky that I didn't go to school, or I'd never met her, see?
- 01-00:14:46
 Wilmot: Mmm hmm.
- 01-00:14:47
 J. Voorhies: No.
- 01-00:14:48
 L. Voorhies: Thank you. [laughing]
- 01-00:14:49
 J. Voorhies: Because I would never have gone to Denver!
- 01-00:14:51
 Wilmot: Did any of your family go to school—go to college?
- 01-00:14:54
 L. Voorhies: No. No.
- 01-00:14:56
 Wilmot: Your father, your —
- 01-00:14:56
 J. Voorhies: My brother didn't. But my brother's son, who was a professor at the University of Nebraska, and he was the curator of the paleontology museum in University of Nebraska. He's the same age as our eldest son. And he's 65 now.

01-00:15:13

L. Voorhies: He just retired.

01-00:15:14

J. Voorhies: He just retired.

01-00:15:16

Wilmot: How about your father? Did he go to college?

01-00:15:18

L. Voorhies: No. No.

01-00:15:19

J. Voorhies: No. No.

01-00:15:20

L. Voorhies: None of our family were highly educated.

01-00:15:22

J. Voorhies: No. And they—No. No.

01-00:15:24

L. Voorhies: College was for the rich. And even more so, there were no loans so people could go to college. It depended on the status of the family as to whether they could go.

01-00:15:40

J. Voorhies: Oh, yeah.

01-00:15:40

L. Voorhies: Also, jobs did not depend particularly on your education but on your ability to do the job. Most promotions were within companies. So the necessary—except for doctors and professional group, college was not basically a necessity which is quite different than nowadays.

01-00:16:09

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

01-00:16:10

Wilmot: Mrs. Voorhies, can I ask you some questions now about your family?

01-00:16:16

L. Voorhies: Okay.

01-00:16:16

Wilmot: And tell me when you were born?

01-00:16:16

L. Voorhies: I was born and raised in Denver, Colorado, born in 1918 also, in the month of September. I was an only child. And my folks were—my father worked

various jobs of—he was an—he married my mother in 1914. And he was a packer in a meat place in Denver. And then things changed, and he became an auto parts manager for various motor companies. Okay. The Depression hit. And the first to go down in the Depression were automotive businesses. He held about four different automotive jobs in less than two years—of changes of companies going broke, basically. And then he too was let out of work. He did not work for seven years, during the Depression. That was in my years of junior high and senior high, basically. And he subsisted with the family. Mother helped out. She was not educated either, only in high—she was a teacher in Kansas, where she was born. But that was not by strictly education. It was a test, I believe, that they took, at that time. And then she never worked after that. Only, during the Depression, she was an excellent seamstress. And she took in home sewing and did lots of alterations and making of garments and so forth. I had mostly homemade or made-over clothes as I was growing up, after the Depression hit. And I can remember that on my 16th birthday a very lovely family that more or less adopted me, who had no children, gave me a complete store-bought outfit, from hat to shoes. Dress, purse, and the whole thing. And I was so proud. Because I had the first bought store outfit that I'd ever had. But I look back now, and I think Mother, some of the things that she made were far better than the store-bought one. [laughs]

01-00:19:00

J. Voorhies:

Yeah.

01-00:19:01

L. Voorhies:

But I never went to college either. Graduated from high school. I had been very active in Rainbow Girls and held an office.

01-00:19:16

Wilmot:

What's Rainbow Girls? What's that?

01-00:19:18

L. Voorhies:

Rainbow Girls is an affiliation of the Eastern Star and the Masonic. And it's by—you had to have someone in the Masonic Order and the Eastern Star to order in this organization. Eventually I became Worthy Advisor, when I first met him, which is the head of that, and thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a wonderful opportunity to further your being able to conduct yourself in a group situation. And there was a lot of memorization of the rituals and so forth. But also the camaraderie of getting along with a group of girls. Our parents were very active in all of our things. Our dances were highly chaperoned by our parents. And we gave special teas to entertain the dignitaries within the organization. We learned a lot of nice cultural things, basically.

Then when I met Jamie—well, I got a job through, believe it or not—a father of one of my Rainbow Girls gave me a job at Montgomery Wards in Denver, Colorado. I was a clerk-typist in the shipping and receiving department,

typing up the bills of lading. And I worked 44 hours a week for 13 cents an hour—was my pay then.

01-00:21:11

J. Voorhies: [chuckles]

01-00:21:12

L. Voorhies: And it was through an individual who worked at Wards who Jamie roomed with. He rented a room from them. And Dick came by one day and said, "Louise, would you like to go on a blind date?" And I said, "Well, what are you going to do?" He said, "We're going on a picnic." And I thought, 'Oh, that's fine.' I said, "Yeah, I'll be glad to go." And I had the first blind date with Jamie.

01-00:21:43

J. Voorhies: [chuckles]

01-00:21:43

L. Voorhies: Well, believe it or not, that, I think, was true love at first sight. We never dated anybody else after that period of time. We both knew that we were meant for each other. And we did go together a year-and-a-half before we married, trying to get our lives stabilized and one thing and another, that way. And we did. We married in 1939. We rented a basement apartment in Denver, for \$25 a month. And it had no furnishings, only they had taken the laundry tubs and converted them into a sink and a drain. Jamie brought home orange crates to make cupboards.

01-00:22:41

J. Voorhies: [chuckling]

01-00:22:42

L. Voorhies: He put them together. And I made little gingham curtains to cover the dishes and so forth that were in these cupboards. And that was the beginning of our married life. We lived there about a year-and-a-half. And then my folks [clock starts to chime] got employment up in the mountains and asked us if we would take over their rental house while they were in the mountains, during the summer. So —

01-00:23:11

Wilmot: Could you stop for one second? The bells are ringing.

01-00:23:18

L. Voorhies: Oh.

01-00:23:22

Wilmot: It's the clock.

01-00:23:32

L. Voorhies: Oh, the clock. The clock.

- 01-00:23:34
J. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.
- 01-00:23:35
L. Voorhies: Okay. I forgot to do the phone, though. Sorry. Okay. Anyway—let's see. Where was I?
- 01-00:23:46
Wilmot: Summer cottage. Summer cottage.
- 01-00:23:50
L. Voorhies: Oh, yes. So we moved in with them. And our first son was born in that home.
- 01-00:23:57
Wilmot: What's his name?
- 01-00:23:58
L. Voorhies: His name was Jon, J-O-N. And, like Jamie said, then he wanted to make a change from grocery clerking. It wasn't the best profession. He wasn't large. We were both small. I think Jamie weighed 98 pounds when I married him. And I think I weighed 95. So we weren't large stature. And he couldn't do a lot of physical, heavy work. So this is when he decided he'd try welding. And he went to opportunity school to weld. And I went to opportunity school for short hand. And then [clock starts to chime] finally he changed and went out to this welding school in Littleton.
- 01-00:24:52
J. Voorhies: Yeah. The —
- 01-00:24:55
Wilmot: Another clock. The other clock is going.
- 01-00:25:00
J. Voorhies: Oh!
- 01-00:25:02
L. Voorhies: [laughs]
- 01-00:25:02
Wilmot: All done. Okay.
- 01-00:25:03
L. Voorhies: We've got lots of clocks.
- 01-00:25:04
Wilmot: Yeah!
- 01-00:25:05
J. Voorhies: Yeah! [laughs] And a lot of them aren't working any more. So we don't have them all in here.

01-00:25:10

L. Voorhies:

Let's see. He came out here in August, latter part of August, to Richmond. And finally he wrote a letter, about the middle of November, and said, "We got an apartment. I've got the letter today." That is most interesting, I think, to a woman. I was actually dumbfounded at what the government had built for us workers. Which was essential. Because they couldn't keep the workers if we didn't have places to live. The units were—there was two-bedroom—one, three of them, on the lower floor. We had an upper floor that had two units with one bedroom. But they were furnished. We had twin beds in the bedroom, a nightstand, a lamp, a chest of drawers, and a place to hang clothes. I don't believe it had doors on it, as I recall. The kitchen had an icebox, very small, but convenient. A butler's kitchen they would call it nowadays, I think. And then a large living/dining room that had a table and four chairs, a sofa bed that made down into a bed, a lamp stand with a lamp, curtains—well, shades I should say, that you pulled down. Which, that was a necessity because we had to have blackouts quite often. So if there was a siren sounded, which it did several times, we had to immediately pull the shades and keep the lights out.

I never worked. I remember a very close relationship that our families became because we were all not familiar with the area. We didn't have our families there. And so we became very close together. The women gathered when the men would be at work. We had a very particular friend, and she had two or three children. And Jon and I would go down and have supper with her a lot. And she taught me a lot about what she cooked. And I shared some recipes with her.

01-00:28:20

Wilmot:

What was her name? [louder] What was her name?

01-00:28:26

L. Voorhies:

What was what?

01-00:28:27

Wilmot:

Her name?

01-00:28:28

L. Voorhies:

Her name was Coletta [Erickson?].

01-00:28:31

Wilmot:

Where was she from?

01-00:28:33

L. Voorhies:

She was from Nebraska.

01-00:28:34

J. Voorhies:

Holdridge.

01-00:28:36

L. Voorhies:

Holdridge. And she married a man who had four sons. And lo and behold, Coletta, in her lifetime, had five children. So there were nine children in that

family, eventually. Coletta is still alive and lives in Holdridge, Nebraska. We hear from her every Christmas. She had—after all these years. And we had a very close neighbor directly across the apartments from us. They were from Massachusetts.

01-00:29:14

J. Voorhies: Yeah, Brookline.

01-00:29:15

L. Voorhies: Oh, Brookline. Okay. And they had one daughter. And she kind of took me under her wing, in fact, kind of was my wartime mother, [laughs] and did a lot things, helped me with my child and babysat a lot and took me—of course, gas rationing was on. We walked a lot. We were lucky if I got to go uptown with her in the car, once a week to, basically, purchase meat and things, with our coupons. Which, everything was rationed. Not everything, but essential things. And you stood in line and got waited on as it was your turn. Except this woman was very pushy —

01-00:30:10

J. Voorhies: [laughs]

01-00:30:11

L. Voorhies: —and embarrassed me many times for butting in out of line. And I did not like that. But that was the only thing I didn't like about Mrs. Edwards, was that she was a pushy individual and kind of embarrassed me that she didn't take her turn. But that was Mrs. Edwards. Well, none of us are alike. We had good times. We could walk anywhere and be safe. Our child, one time—Jamie worked swing shift.

01-00:30:49

J. Voorhies: So—I worked graveyard.

01-00:30:51

L. Voorhies: Or graveyard. All right. He worked graveyard. Excuse me. And one morning, unbeknownst to me, our little close to two-year-old, then, climbed out of his crib, opened the door, and walked down to the corner of Cutting, which is a busy traffic area, to wait for Daddy to come home. And Daddy came home. The dri—person let him out at Cutting. John knew this. And he was waiting on the corner for Daddy in his pajamas. [laughs] So from then on, whenever I put him outside for a while, because there were no fences, I made a—we got a harness, and we fastened him to a rope, [laughs] to the corner post on the porch, so that he could play, play in the grass or whatever, dig in the dirt or whatever and not be supervised with somebody having to be right there all the time. So we have pictures of him on the rope from the porch, [laughs] down on Cutting. Yeah, it was a good time. We felt—Jamie was 4F. And we felt we were doing our part.

But also we were getting good things in return. He got to be with Kaiser health plan immediately. And then, within about two years, they allowed the

families to come in. And we still are members of Kaiser health plan. They have given us excellent care. It is quite an organization now. And I'm sure Henry J., that started this up in Washington state, would be utterly dumbfounded at the growth of this HMO. But that—we just retired, after volunteering down at Kaiser 20 years—I volunteered. I had 10,000 hours with Kaiser. Jamie volunteered for 12 years and had just less than 2,000 hours. So we put a lot of hours in on Kaiser.

01-00:33:23

Wilmot: What did you do? What did you do as a volunteer?

01-00:33:24

L. Voorhies: Well, I had worked in—I basically went to work—I'll have to go back a little bit now. Basically, I didn't work, until Jon needed braces. By that time I had another child. He was five years older—or younger than John.

01-00:33:47

Wilmot: How old is he? What's the name of your second child?

01-00:33:49

L. Voorhies: Second child is Ray. And Ray still lives in the area and works with Ch—did work with Chevron, is now retired also. Well, he needed braces, Jon did. And I couldn't afford it. So I went to work for American Radiator, as a time clerk, basically. And from there, my neighbor—we had, oh, moved from—then. 1946, we moved to this property, up here on Bernhard. We were out in the country. There were only five houses in our block. We had septic tanks. We had gas, and we had electricity. No curbs, no sidewalks, no lighting. That kind of—but we were out in the country. We had this old house, which is what we could afford at that time. And we owned the lot next door. Eventually we—then we went—I lost my train of thought again.

01-00:35:11

Wilmot: It's okay.

01-00:35:11

L. Voorhies: That's what old age does for you.

01-00:35:13

Wilmot: Well, you were—okay.

01-00:35:14

L. Voorhies: Huh?

01-00:35:15

Wilmot: You were talking about the kind of work you did.

01-00:35:19

L. Voorhies: Oh, yes.

01-00:35:19

Wilmot: How much did you pay for this house?

- 01-00:35:23
L. Voorhies: How much did they pay me?
- 01-00:35:25
Wilmot: How much did you pay for this house, back then?
- 01-00:35:27
L. Voorhies: Oh! The old house, we paid \$4,200 for.
- 01-00:35:34
J. Voorhies: Included the lot.
- 01-00:35:35
L. Voorhies: That was a lot of—and that was the two lots, basically. So then we lived in that house until 1965. And it was not fixable. It was built before codes. We couldn't do this, or we couldn't do that. So we moved down the street, and tore the old house down and rebuilt the one that we're in now, in 1966. So —
- 01-00:36:06
Wilmot: Who did the old house belong to? Who did the old house belong to?
- 01-00:36:13
L. Voorhies: The old house—it was ours.
- 01-00:36:16
Wilmot: But before you moved in. Who did you buy it from?
- 01-00:36:19
J. Voorhies: Oh —
- 01-00:36:19
L. Voorhies: I don't remember. The man that built it didn't live in the area. We didn't see much of him. I'm not sure.
- 01-00:36:26
Wilmot: It was abandoned when you moved in? [louder] Was it abandoned when you moved in?
- 01-00:36:32
L. Voorhies: No. No. We bought it from the individual that—he was moving and wanted to sell. And that's how come we bought that.
- 01-00:36:41
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 01-00:36:42
L. Voorhies: And so but then I went to work after that. I went to work with Emporium Capwell.
- 01-00:36:54
Wilmot: In Oakland?

01-00:36:56

L. Voorhies: No, in El Cerrito, when the store was brand new. My neighbor wanted a job. Would I go with her? And I said yeah. So I went down. And lo and behold, I thought, "Well, I'll put in an application too." And I put in an application, and she did. Well, I got hired, and she didn't. [laughs] But anyway, I worked, basically, in personnel, with Capwells in El Cerrito for 25 years. And I retired from there in 1983.

01-00:37:32

J. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.

01-00:37:34

L. Voorhies: And then I went to volunteering for Kaiser in 1985. Because I missed people. The children were grown, and I needed the contact with people yet. I'd always been a people person. So I went down to Kaiser to volunteer. Well, because I had worked in a department store, the director decided—and trained me, after about a year, to do the buying for the gift shop. So I remained the buyer of the gift shop at Kaiser in Richmond.

01-00:38:14

Wilmot: On a volunteer basis? On a volunteer basis?

01-00:38:17

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

01-00:38:18

L. Voorhies: On a volunteer basis, for all the years. It eventually worked from a little bitty—oh, just a counter, where we sold this and that, not much of anything, to an actual gift shop, staffed by about eight or ten women. I had two that worked with me in the back room pricing and displaying merchandise, so forth and so on. I would say I averaged around 18 hours a week, for many years. Until old age finally catches up to you. And my mind, luckily, says, "Keep going," but my body says, "No." [laughs] And so we just retired, basically, from those position. He worked—he displayed magazines for the shop—or for the hospital. And we retired in April of this year.

01-00:39:26

Wilmot: So you stayed very involved with Kaiser.

01-00:39:29

L. Voorhies: Very involved. But we made friends. You'll find, as you get older, you don't make as many friends. Your children are grown. Your contacts—people move away. And neighborhoods change dramatically nowadays. I think we're probably the oldest residents up in this area—

01-00:39:54

J. Voorhies: Mmm.

01-00:39:54

L. Voorhies: —at the present time.

- 01-00:39:55
J. Voorhies: Oh, yeah.
- 01-00:39:56
Wilmot: What is this area called?
- 01-00:39:58
L. Voorhies: It's called East Richmond Heights. We're—are in the county. We are not in the city of El Cerrito or Richmond, either one. So it's basically in the county. Our property backs up to Wildcat Canyon, which is basically now—no one can build back of us. And it's a very rural community. I'll have to tell you that the oldest boy shot his first deer down in the canyon years ago, when he was a teenager. Dad was an avid hunter. And he had gone through all the training with a gun. And he and a buddy went back in the canyon, and, lo and behold, here they come back saying, "Dad, you've got to come help us. We got a deer."
- 01-00:40:58
J. Voorhies: [laughs]
- 01-00:40:58
L. Voorhies: And he brought his first deer—down in the canyon. Of course, nowadays that's way past. But it was nothing illegal at that particular time. There were no residences back there.
- 01-00:41:09
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 01-00:41:10
L. Voorhies: So. We've had quite a life.
- 01-00:41:13
Wilmot: I have a question, a back-up question?
- 01-00:41:18
L. Voorhies: Sure.
- 01-00:41:19
Wilmot: Your parents' names and —
- 01-00:41:23
L. Voorhies: My parents?
- 01-00:41:24
Wilmot: Names.
- 01-00:41:24
L. Voorhies: Names?
- 01-00:41:25
Wilmot: Yeah.

01-00:41:25

L. Voorhies: Unh huh. My father was Raymond—Ray—Wasser.

01-00:41:30

Wilmot: Wasser. W-A—?

01-00:41:30

L. Voorhies: His—W-A-S-S-E-R. His ancestry came from what we call German-Dutch. They evidently were German and then went to Holland and then came to the U.S. We know not very much about his side of the family. No one ever relayed all of these things down to my dad. And by the time that I became definitely interested in genealogy, most of the—any information was long gone. He had three brothers and two sisters, I believe it was. And Dad lived to be 87. And mother was born in Kansas, and she was Ethel Zelma Matthews. She had quite a history in her family. That, we know. Her grandmother married—was from Stockholm, Sweden. And she married a man beneath her class, was disowned by her family, and they had a child, which was my grandmother. And they got on a ship and came to the States. He got cholera on the ship and died, and was buried at sea. She came into New York City not knowing a soul and got a room, could not return back to Sweden. She was disowned by the family, the child was not recognized, so forth. So a woman in a boarding house took her in. And within a year-and-a-half, as I recall now, she too died, undoubtedly from a broken heart and all kinds of things. So the woman in the rooming house adopted my grandmother. She carries her Swedish name and then the name of the woman that adopted her. Right now, it escapes me. But that family, they went on, and they became farmers—was in the—what was—

01-00:44:17

J. Voorhies: Hm?

01-00:44:17

L. Voorhies: The diary man. What was his name? The man that wrote the diary. What—?

01-00:44:22

J. Voorhies: Oh!

01-00:44:24

L. Voorhies: Ohh! We're blank. [laughs] Well, anyway, he was a farmer in Iowa. And he had a gristmill on a little river —

01-00:44:39

J. Voorhies: Oh! I know what you're talking about.

01-00:44:40

L. Voorhies: —called Red Rock, Iowa. And he traveled out to California in 1850 on a wagon train, with some brothers, and became fascinated with the country. Well, to make a long story short, the little river flooded a great deal, flooded out his grist mill. And they had quite a bit of problem that way. So in 1852, he convinced his wife that they should take their child and go to California. I

have a diary that Grandma kept on the trip, from Red Rock, Iowa, to Stockton, California. They eventually settled in Visalia area. He had the first grist mill, making flour and so forth, down in Visalia. The grist stone and much of his history, along with his two brothers, who accompanied him, is in the museums in that area. We're very proud of that area. And that's quite a thing to have. But I have the original diary that Grandma wrote of the trip out here.

01-00:46:06

Wilmot: But you ended up in Denver? But you ended up in Denver.

01-00:46:11

L. Voorhies: Well, my mother then—that was her grand—they were in Kansas. And she was born in Kansas. So then my mother married my father, who was in Denver. That's how they go to Colorado.

01-00:46:31

Wilmot: Okay!

01-00:46:31

L. Voorhies: And then I was born in Colorado.

01-00:46:33

Wilmot: Thank you.

01-00:46:35

L. Voorhies: Mmm.

01-00:46:36

Wilmot: Okay. Well, I wanted to turn back to the war years in Richmond.

01-00:46:40

L. Voorhies: Yes.

01-00:46:41

Wilmot: And I had a couple of questions for you. Wartime in Richmond, can you talk to me about—were you aware of what was going on in Germany?

01-00:46:59

J. Voorhies: Well, they —

01-00:47:00

Wilmot: Were you aware of the Holocaust in Germany?

01-00:47:02

L. Voorhies: Were we aware of the Holocaust?

01-00:47:05

J. Voorhies: I was a history buff, and I read a lot of history. And I knew that during World War I there was a lot of propaganda that was false. The English and the Americans claimed the Germans did a lot of things which they didn't. That's the terrible Hun. So when these rumors came out about what was happening in Germany, some of it we just didn't believe.

01-00:47:31

L. Voorhies: No.

01-00:47:32

J. Voorhies: Because—not that I particularly loved Germans one way or another, but they were family people, they were great musicians, and a lot of other good things about them, and I couldn't imagine a people putting up with what—ultimately happened. And I knew that—I followed the history of the rise of the Third Reich. And I remember some of the things—one of the things that really struck home, when we—we were fortunate enough to see some of these things happening in newsreels. But when they had the night of glass—I can't remember what they called it.

01-00:48:16

Wilmot: Kristallnacht.

01-00:48:19

J. Voorhies: When the Germans broke all the businesses up of the Jews. And so afterwards I read a great deal about it. But at the time it was happening —

01-00:48:35

L. Voorhies: I —

01-00:48:35

J. Voorhies: —we just didn't believe it.

01-00:48:38

L. Voorhies: We couldn't imagine—there were rumors of what we would now call—Oh, what do you call that?

01-00:48:47

J. Voorhies: Well, we didn't believe in the —

01-00:48:48

L. Voorhies: Genocide.

01-00:48:49

J. Voorhies: We didn't —

01-00:48:49

L. Voorhies: There was rumors of genocide. But you don't believe it. That can't be happening. There aren't humans that would do that to humans.

01-00:48:57

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

01-00:48:58

L. Voorhies: It was, in a way, unbelievable.

01-00:49:01

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

01-00:49:02

L. Voorhies:

You more or less pushed it aside. To the fact, too, that—you must remember we were not informed like we are nowadays. Ours was a scanty little newsreel shown in a theater or a war correspondent on the radio. The pictures were not vivid. Our papers didn't carry pictures of the war, basically. The awareness of the whole country has changed so drastically, to where now there isn't a thing that you aren't made aware of within hours of its happening, sometimes minutes. And that part was unbelievable, in our lifetime.

01-00:49:56

J. Voorhies:

Yeah.

01-00:49:57

L. Voorhies:

So all of that was kind of hidden, or we weren't aware of it. I do remember seeing the throngs on the newsreels of the followers of Hitler and the crowds and the young people marching. And I thought, 'That is so unreal. How can people worship an individual, like that? How can he control--?' But we didn't know why. We didn't know why.

01-00:50:32

J. Voorhies:

Well, I know now why —

01-00:50:34

L. Voorhies:

Yes.

01-00:50:35

J. Voorhies:

—it was happening. Following World War I, the Allies put unbelievable—impossible things against Germany. There was no way in the world they could pay it off. And, of course, the Depression hit Germany early, probably 1920 or slightly earlier. And it was terrible. And I had an acquaintance, much older, of course, who was in the Army of Occupation, the U.S. Army. And he brought back a 100,000-mark note, which he picked up off of the street. And it wouldn't buy a loaf of bread. And this is true. And what she mentioned, about the brutality taking place, it was hard to believe—except you started to doubt the goodness of the Germans, you know. And we have been fortunate enough to have visited Germany a couple of times. And, of course, since the war. And, you know, they never mention it. They never mention Hitler. And we have good friends that are Jews, that live close by here. And I've given him all my books on Holocaust, that I can't read any more. And—

01-00:52:10

L. Voorhies:

His father died in camp —

01-00:52:13

J. Voorhies:

Camp, yeah.

01-00:52:13

L. Voorhies:

—in Germany.

- 01-00:52:14
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 01-00:52:15
L. Voorhies: His mother escaped. But his father died in the —
- 01-00:52:18
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 01-00:52:18
L. Voorhies: —during—And it's just like now we still can't imagine what—all of this genocide is going on. It's just unbelievable to us. Even though we know now that it is, in other parts of the world. And it's just beyond belief that humans can act this way.
- 01-00:52:47
J. Voorhies: I can mention something that is a little out of the way. We had friends in Denver. He was a Japanese man. His name was Kobayashi. And he put himself through pharmacy school. His parents couldn't own property, but they rented a farm near Denver. And he put himself through pharmacy school and bought a pharmacy, a drugstore, and then put himself through medical school. And he became one of the outstanding children's doctors in Denver. His name was T.K. Kobayashi. And I remember we were—
- 01-00:53:33
L. Voorhies: 16th.
- 01-00:53:33
J. Voorhies: On the day of the bombing in Hawaii, we were going down 16th Street in our car to go down to his drugstore to have our weekly treat, which was a Coca Cola, when the—had the radio on, and they announced the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Well, I knew where Pearl Harbor was, but I just—I had no idea that the military had all of their ships tied up in there. And we got down to the drugstore, and, of course, they were shocked beyond belief, you know? And one of the men that—it was a brother-in-law who ran the drugstore end of it. Karasaki, his name was. He was just almost in tears.
- 01-00:54:30
L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.
- 01-00:54:31
J. Voorhies: And the way that we treated the Japanese during the war was terrible—I mean, the locals. You know, they lost everything, a lot of them. And yet the men volunteered, when they could, and became the fightingest group of men [laughs] in our army, the most highly decorated. The 444th, I think it was called. And but every time we went back to Denver, for years, we'd stop to see Kobayashi. I suspect he's dead now—no doubt. He was older than us, a bit. Brilliant man, brilliant! I said, "Boy, you people are a lot smarter than the rest of us." "No, we're not any smarter, we just work harder." Which was true. They worked. Oh, goodness.

When we came out here, I don't remember at all of any racial problems. As she mentioned, that—we lived on South 16th. And we would walk down to 8th Street, at Yard One, and get on a ferry, which cost ten cents, and go to San Francisco. And we'd go to a movie or—and we would walk the length of—

- 01-00:55:59
L. Voorhies: Market.
- 01-00:56:00
J. Voorhies: —Market Street. Not the length of it but up to the theaters.
- 01-00:56:03
L. Voorhies: We walked, mainly, through Market Street to gather cigarettes —
- 01-00:56:09
J. Voorhies: To [laughs] get cigarettes!
- 01-00:56:10
L. Voorhies: —for you and Norm because they were rationed. And you could only buy a pack or two.
- 01-00:56:13
J. Voorhies: A few cigarettes. Yeah.
- 01-00:56:16
L. Voorhies: And they would walk the length of Market Street and buy their cigarettes one pack at a time.
- 01-00:56:21
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 01-00:56:22
L. Voorhies: Because you couldn't buy a carton.
- 01-00:56:23
J. Voorhies: No, no.
- 01-00:56:24
L. Voorhies: I had to do something similar. The only thing I remember I really and truly had to hunt for was hosiery, silk stockings. And every so often we would hear such a store's going to have a supply on a certain day. And we would go over to the city to try and get them. There were a lot of things that were rationed. But, you know, we did very well with it. We don't remember that we really wanted for much. There was flour, sugar, shortenings—oh—
- 01-00:57:03
J. Voorhies: Coffee.
- 01-00:57:04
L. Voorhies: —coffee. A lot of those essential things, we only got a stamp that we could use, and there would only be so many stamps per book. Which we were issued the books on a monthly basis, I believe. You took it for granted. You took it a

part of the war effort. We knew why. The supply was short. We couldn't get what they needed to make all these products or to ship these products. There was far more important things to ship, the men, than all of these products. And in those days, rail products—basically was the way it was transported from one place to another. So you took it all in your stride, that it was necessary. And in a way, you felt you were doing your part by —

01-00:58:01

J. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.

01-00:58:01

L. Voorhies: —doing it that way.

01-00:58:04

J. Voorhies: One of the things that may—the rationing, we got three gallons of gasoline a week. Wasn't it a week?

01-00:58:14

L. Voorhies: Mmm?

01-00:58:15

J. Voorhies: And we would save up enough, you know, finally, that we could take a little drive. And the tires were out. You couldn't get tires. So you had to get on the list for that. And such things as work clothes, shoes, boots, you had to go through an agency to get them. And I remember I had to have tires. This was along maybe in 1944 or so. And finally I got a set of retreads, which they don't even do now. But they used to retread old tires. And I remember I came home and the day or two after I got home with them, I went out, and I had a flat tire. I had driven over the bottom of a beer bottle.

01-00:59:12

L. Voorhies: [laughs]

01-00:59:12

J. Voorhies: And it just cookie-cuttered a hole in the tire about that big, you know. Well, I had to get that vulcanized. But you couldn't get batteries. But we knew what the British were going through.

01-00:59:26

L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.

01-00:59:27

J. Voorhies: So it didn't seem bad at all. My goodness, we had eggs, and we had this, and we had that. And those people didn't have nothing, you know? Yeah. We were very fortunate. We could produce—and the country—the reason that we were victorious in the war boiled down to the fact that we weren't bombed, and our factories went full blast, and we had an unlimited supply of labor so that we could get these things done. While in Britain, every shipyard and every airplane factory and everyplace else was bombed regularly. So naturally, they couldn't produce very much.

And we were born in a country where virtually everybody was Republicans. And that's what we grew up as, I know. My jiggers, I had one uncle that was a Democrat, and he was kind of an outcast.

01-01:00:27

L. Voorhies: [laughs]

01-01:00:27

J. Voorhies: And—[laughs] Really! This is how it was.

01-01:00:31

L. Voorhies: Well, I've always said my dad would vote Republican if the devil himself was running! [laughs]

01-01:00:37

J. Voorhies: Yeah. That's the way it was. And —

01-01:00:39

L. Voorhies: I mean, it was a die-hard situation. You were a Democrat, or you were a Republican.

01-01:00:43

J. Voorhies: Oh, yeah. That was deep stuff, you know. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

01-01:00:48

L. Voorhies: Yeah.

01-01:00:48

J. Voorhies: And we were—I know, when we came out here, the thing that I started, with what I did for a living—I wanted to do a good job. Because maybe the next ship, I'd be on.

01-01:01:07

L. Voorhies: [laughs]

01-01:01:08

J. Voorhies: Because they were drafting people all the time, right away—everybody around you. And I had all of my cousins, bunches of them, about 17 of them, who were in the military—including my brother. And this included girls. And, of course, that was unheard of, and before. And I had a lot of girls in the military.

01-01:01:30

L. Voorhies: Yeah. No, it was quite a time. We were very pleased after we got out here. We liked the climate. We kind of missed the seasons. We were both born where we had summer, spring, autumn, and fall, the whole nine yards, you know, winter. But we enjoyed this part. The temperatures in this Bay Area seemed to suit both of us better. We didn't like extreme cold or extreme hot. So that was basically the main reason why we stayed.

01-01:02:13

Wilmot: Okay.

Begin Audio File Voornies 2.mp3

02-00:00:00

L. Voorhies: I recall one thing, travel during the war years. Of course, we were gasoline rationed. Our families were in Nebraska and Colorado. And we missed our families. So the only way to do it would be to take the trains. So I have made about probably three trips during the war, by train, to Colorado and Nebraska.

They were quite the trips. Basically, they were on troop trains, which—they put into service practically every car they had in the railroad system to send these boys from here to there, to everywhere. And so you were lucky enough to get a ticket on the train that day, it was an experience. I had Jon, the youngest, with me. And we got on this troop train, and the boys were all so kind to help me with the little one. And what few civilian passengers were aboard, we were very pleased to have—and so proud of all the young men that were onboard.

And it was quite a thing. As I recall we had no dining facilities. I think I packed sandwiches. And we could get water and so forth. But we had to pack our lunch, basically, on the train. And I would go to Denver. Then from Denver to Nebraska, I don't think I went with Jon then. I waited until—we didn't go back to Nebraska during the war, on the train. No. Just to Denver. And then—but it was quite an experience.

Our pleasures were many, in the fact that everything we did was a treat. It didn't have to be an expensive concert or whatever, like nowadays, for entertainment. A show in Richmond. We would walk up to Macdonald Avenue to the theater. If lucky enough, they might have a double feature, and we'd get two for one that day. [laughs] I don't remember the cost of them. I'm sure it wasn't over 50 cents.

02-00:03:08

J. Voorhies: No. Wasn't that much. Twenty-five —

02-00:03:10

L. Voorhies: Something like that.

02-00:03:11

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

02-00:03:12

L. Voorhies: And then occasionally, when we did take the ferry to San Francisco, we went out to Ocean Beach and rode the rides. Of course, everything was not—at dusk they were all shut down because they couldn't have the lights on at Playland during the night hours on account of the blackouts. Our streets—for instance, when we were house hunting, first, looking around the area, there

were no streetlights lit at night. And so you made your way strictly by guess or by golly, or the line down the center. [laughs]

02-00:04:03

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

02-00:04:04

L. Voorhies: Yeah. It was—yeah.

02-00:04:07

J. Voorhies: In San Francisco all of the lights were shaded.

02-00:04:11

L. Voorhies: Yes.

02-00:04:12

J. Voorhies: And everything out beyond Golden Gate Park and what used to be Playland out there, they had no lights at all. And I remember, before Louise came out, Norm and I went to Playland, and we had to drive with just parking lights.

02-00:04:32

L. Voorhies: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

02-00:04:33

J. Voorhies: And, there was always, in the back of your mind, during the war, was the fact that we might have an air raid. Because they had done some things. Submarines had shot at shore down on Los Angeles area.

02-00:04:52

L. Voorhies: And up north.

02-00:04:53

J. Voorhies: And up north. And so you knew all of these things were possible. And, of course, December—what, 7th?—was fresh in our mind, at Pearl Harbor. And so we figured they'd be here. And I remember there was a—I don't know who he was. But there was a young man who was the son of an acquaintance. He was in the military prior to the war, and he was an officer in charge of shore defenses here in the Bay Area. And he told us—he said, [laughs] "If they decide to come in, they can. There's nothing to stop them." Which was true. At the time, they were building—you're probably familiar with the national park over in Marin County and the Marin Headlands?

02-00:05:43

Wilmot: Mmm hmm. Yes.

02-00:05:45

J. Voorhies: And a lot of that was being built during the war. Of course, they had some stuff that was left over from World War I.

02-00:05:51

L. Voorhies: And from the Spanish-American War.

02-00:05:53

J. Voorhies:

Yeah. And but he said, "You know, we haven't got anything over there. And if they decide to come in, they'll come in." Well, of course, this made you a little leery. And only in one time in the shipyards at night—I worked graveyard for three years. And then six months, I was on days, at the tail end. But we were on an LST that had been built in Yard 4. And they brought them up—some of them up to Yard 3 to be finished. They were floating. And the PA system announced for everybody to leave the ships and get onshore. I never could figure this out. I didn't ever understand this. You were just as safe in the ship as you would be onshore, I thought. But anyway, one of the men said—it was a moonlight night. And he said, "There it is! There's a plane." And he pointed up. Well, we saw this. And I lined it up with some of the framework of the crane that was right next to us, and it didn't move.

02-00:07:00

J. Voorhies:

[laughs]

02-00:07:00

J. Voorhies:

He saw a star. Well, that was a false alarm. There wasn't anything. And that was the only time that I ever remember of doing it.

02-00:07:09

J. Voorhies:

We had one air raid siren that I remember, when we were living in the units.

02-00:07:15

J. Voorhies:

Yeah. That was it.

02-00:07:16

J. Voorhies:

You were at work. And that was the night. And they sounded.

02-00:07:19

J. Voorhies:

Yeah.

02-00:07:20

J. Voorhies:

And what do you do? Where do you go? You know. There was no place. We had no shelter—bomb shelter, locally. Several places in Richmond you get there, but that was a long walk or road, and I couldn't take a child and start out in the middle of the night like that. So you just hunkered down and hoped and prayed it wouldn't happen. But you listened with all ears, I'll tell you.

02-00:07:49

J. Voorhies:

Yeah.

02-00:07:50

J. Voorhies:

And, of course, you never heard a plane. And that was the best part, was we never heard planes. And I think that's why, had the Japanese never struck Pearl Harbor, we would not perhaps have done that, sending the Japanese to live in camps around and so forth. But again, we became so defensive. Which, in a way, we're at that stage now. A man, yesterday, stated that San Francisco had three incidences around the courthouse of a suitcase, a sack, and another

box. And everybody right now becomes instantly protective and wanting to know. So they call in the bomb squads, and they vacate the buildings. This is the kind of fear that, in a way, was instigated in each and every one of us. We knew that we weren't invisible. We knew that it could happen. Well, it was just by the grace of God and the lack of their knowledge that, I think, we weren't further —

02-00:09:14

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

02-00:09:15

L. Voorhies: —destructive.

02-00:09:15

J. Voorhies: Yeah. Yeah. Mmm hmm.

02-00:09:17

L. Voorhies: Based—it was their intelligence—is nothing like our intelligence nowadays. But again, you go with is intelligence based on fact, or is it based on could-be's?

02-00:09:36

J. Voorhies: Or fear?

02-00:09:36

L. Voorhies: Or fear itself? Back in those days I think it was strictly fear itself. We didn't have the technology of any of this now. Otherwise, Pearl Harbor never would have happened, and so forth and so on. And you can go on down on history. But that's probably progress, in one way. And in another way, fear controls people, to a lot of degree. And I think that's what Hitler instilled, basically, was fear. If they didn't, what would happen? Morality among people is shown that way. That's why the Germans didn't resist, for fear of what would happen. If the children didn't join the Nazi group, oh, what would happen? What would they be thought of? Would they confis—? Would the government do something and take their business? All of a lot of war is based on fear and fear alone, I truly believe. And to this day and age, our crime is based on fear, basically. And probably rightfully too. It was the day—remember, we never locked doors. We went downtown. We left the door unlocked. The kids could come in from the yard or the neighbors or wherever they were, to get whatever they wanted. We didn't have to give them all keys. There was a lot of—we felt secure. And once you lose security, it's surprising what fear can do to you.

02-00:11:42

J. Voorhies: Do you remember what Roosevelt said? And he was a Democrat, of course. "Nothing to fear but fear itself."

And we—I think on the whole of our existence here in Richmond [clock starts chiming] and working in the shipyards—we worked six days a week, and I

worked graveyard—you really didn't have much time to do anything but eat and sleep and work. I never had a vacation for three-and-a-half years, about four years. And—

02-00:12:23
Wilmot: The clocks are —

02-00:12:24
J. Voorhies: The phone?

02-00:12:25
L. Voorhies: Clock.

02-00:12:26
J. Voorhies: Oh, clock. [laughter] And so people had very little trouble. I don't recall—and, of course, memory is not good. But I don't recall of any crime. And we have shootings now regular, you know. Every—I'm sick and tired of even watching the news. Because there are so many murders and shootings and—and there was just a kid shot in San Francisco yesterday, nine years old, I think. He was playing basketball, and some hoodlums came by and started shooting. And, you know, this sort of thing never happened. And we just—my goodness, I would have—if times were like they are now, I would have worried sick about her being alone in the house. You know. And I never worried about anything like that.

02-00:13:29
L. Voorhies: No.

02-00:13:29
J. Voorhies: And—oh, no. And theft was way down. People were so happy to be working. Because we'd just come through the Depression. And it was still—if it hadn't been for World War II, the Depression would have continued for a long time.

02-00:13:44
L. Voorhies: Oh yeah.

02-00:13:45
J. Voorhies: And we well remember it. I never went hungry. There were just times when I would like to have had another pair of shoes. That was about the big extent.

02-00:13:59
L. Voorhies: You got chicken three meals a day, almost. Because Mom couldn't sell the chickens, so they ate the chickens

02-00:14:05
J. Voorhies: [laughter] Yeah. During the Depression, the worst part of it, in Nebraska, my mother raised chickens. And she couldn't get enough money out of them to take them to town. Hogs, at one time, were two cents a pound, in Sioux City, Iowa. And that wouldn't pay for their freight down. And this is how tough hard times were

02-00:14:30

L. Voorhies: Well, that's why farmers were self-sufficient. Basically, the little farms then were to raise enough crops to feed their livestock, to have enough meat to put down or enough gardens to do for the year. They had the fruit trees for the fruit. It was a self-sufficient—a farmer's life was self-sufficient.

02-00:14:53

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

02-00:14:54

L. Voorhies: It was not, basically, to supply the world goods which now is changed.

02-00:15:02

J. Voorhies: Oh, my.

02-00:15:03

L. Voorhies: Small farms, even the little truck farms now, aren't happening. So this is progress or however you want to term this, but it's things that we see so drastically changed in our lifetime. Jamie's mother said that she thinks—and I think I agree with her—in her 98 years—and she's been gone now ten years—

02-00:15:31

J. Voorhies: Close to it.

02-00:15:32

L. Voorhies: —something like that. And she said she saw the most changes in her lifetime. And I think she's right. The car. Grandpa courted her in a horse and buggy. And would go and pick her up in town. She lived in town, and he lived on a farm. They'd go to a dance. And after midnight, then he'd deposit her in town. And then he'd have to drive maybe the eight or ten miles to the farm, back home, get home about 3:00 am, in time to get up at 5:00 am to start his farm chores. But—and then they had the old crank phones, you know, where you call the operator. "Myrtle, I need Joe, down the line," you know. Radio, I had a crystal set when I was a little girl, with headphones, was our radio. And then I remember the radios that came on. TV. All of the things that have progressed so fast in—and we're progressing even faster now.

02-00:16:49

Wilmot: Yeah!

02-00:16:49

L. Voorhies: —with technology.

02-00:16:50

Wilmot: Yeah!

02-00:16:50

J. Voorhies: Well, these things here. I mean—

- 02-00:16:52
L. Voorhies: Skills and technology things is beyond belief, what they're accomplishing nowadays.
- 02-00:17:02
J. Voorhies: Our —
- 02-00:17:02
L. Voorhies: But it goes fast.
- 02-00:17:04
Wilmot: I—sorry? Were you going to say something? I have a question. How is this wartime different than that wartime? How is the war we're in now different from the war we were in in World War II?
- 02-00:17:19
J. Voorhies: Oh! Well, we felt it at the time, because we were being attacked on both coasts. And, of course, we were allied with Britain for a long time, and they were getting hammered and —
- 02-00:17:35
L. Voorhies: Our ships were mainly—
- 02-00:17:37
J. Voorhies: And we saw what happened to France and the lowland countries and all of that. And now, without getting into political things, things are happening now that we don't really agree with, or feel the necessity of it. We may be so backward that we don't realize our problems. But we weren't in favor of the invasion of Iraq. And we were certainly in favor of everything that happened during World War II.
- 02-00:18:15
L. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:18:16
J. Voorhies: Because—
- 02-00:18:16
L. Voorhies: Because we were attacked.
- 02-00:18:18
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:18:18
L. Voorhies: We knew it. It was positive. It was there.
- 02-00:18:22
J. Voorhies: My aunt and uncle—he worked for a road contractor in Colorado. And his company was purchased by the—to go to Jamaica to build an airbase on a foreign country, a U.S. airbase in Jamaica. This was the first time this was ever done. This was Lend-Lease. And they stayed down there. And they went

down on a ship from Florida. And they were sinking so many ships along our coast that they came home on airplane —

02-00:19:00

L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.

02-00:19:00

J. Voorhies: —a military aircraft of some kind, back to Denver. And people don't realize now how many sinks were sunk along our East Coast —

02-00:19:13

L. Voorhies: Oh.

02-00:19:14

J. Voorhies: —not only our ships but anybody's ships that were there. And there weren't very many sunk here on the West Coast. There were some but not much. But on the East Coast there were several hundred. And we had a destroyer sunk by the Germans. And a lot of ships were sunk. And so we really realized the necessity of stopping him. And I read a great deal about World War II, and, among the things that I—have come to the conclusion that, if it hadn't been for Winston Churchill, I don't think we could have won the war. Because, had he not bolstered up the British people to continue fighting, they would have folded just like the French and the Dutch and everybody else that got—Poland and everybody else. But he did this. And we had a place to anchor our troops and material and everything to make the invasion of Germany possible. And so I think that really happened. I'm probably in the minority about this, but that's the way I feel about it.

02-00:20:34

L. Voorhies: My one feeling about the present war, basically, Iraq, in comparison to the other is our lifestyles have changed so much, and we're relying on oil, things from other countries, that kind of things, that are economical interests—have so expanded that now economics have a lot to do with the war, I believe. I really do. Regardless of terrorism or whatever. I truly feel that part of it is caused by the economic world, who are dictating the way things go. And that, strictly, I guess, is what you call progress, countries sharing what they have with other countries, making pacts, which I don't think were in existence as much during World War II. We had little agreements about what was right or wrong, but, as far as dependency on people, goods, what we needed to survive, it has changed so much that I think the outlook between the two is definitely much different—than it was in World War II. Don't you agree?

02-00:22:18

J. Voorhies: Oh, yeah. They—of course, we knew that, pretty well, that we wouldn't be actually physically attacked, personally. That was way over there someplace. But we —

02-00:22:32

L. Voorhies: That's the way you felt.

- 02-00:22:34
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:22:34
L. Voorhies: [laughs]
- 02-00:22:34
J. Voorhies: We hoped. You had several thousand miles of ocean on both sides of you, which was a great thing. It was a lot bigger than the English Channel.
- 02-00:22:46
L. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:22:47
J. Voorhies: We've been fortunate enough to have traveled a little since the war. So we've seen some of the things that those people had done. We were in Poland, and we were in Warsaw. And the city of Warsaw was pretty well demolished by the Germans, not by warfare but by systematically bombing—dynamiting buildings. And when we were there in '89, I believe, they had completely rebuilt the country. You didn't see any ruins. And here we've taken, what, 20 years to build a bridge? And this irritates me to death, you know.
- 02-00:23:42
Wilmot: What—? You're talking about the Bay Bridge?
- 02-00:23:45
J. Voorhies: Yeah!
- 02-00:23:45
L. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:23:45
J. Voorhies: And it isn't done yet. Now the original bridge was built in two years.
- 02-00:23:51
L. Voorhies: [laughs]
- 02-00:23:52
J. Voorhies: And I can't understand—and I'm so old and old fashioned, I cannot understand why we have to fiddle around to build something that is relatively as simple as a bridge. My goodness. The Golden Gate bridge was built in 1936.
- 02-00:24:10
L. Voorhies: It becomes a political issue. I mean, I can't help but feel that politics, in a way, has divided us.
- 02-00:24:21
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:24:22
L. Voorhies: The two mayors can't get an agreement on what kind of a bridge to build between the two cities.

- 02-00:24:27
J. Voorhies: I don't see where it was any of their business —
- 02-00:24:28
L. Voorhies: Well, have they any business?
- 02-00:24:28
J. Voorhies: —to start with.
- 02-00:24:30
L. Voorhies: Who's paying for that bridge?
- 02-00:24:32
J. Voorhies: Yeah! [laughs]
- 02-00:24:33
L. Voorhies: I mean, why should they have any say in it?
- 02-00:24:36
Wilmot: I have a question—
- 02-00:24:37
L. Voorhies: Yeah!
- 02-00:24:38
Wilmot: —just to go back to wartime. What did you know about the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima?
- 02-00:24:47
L. Voorhies: The bombing of where?
- 02-00:24:49
Wilmot: Nagasaki and Hiroshima? [louder]
- 02-00:24:51
J. Voorhies: Oh! Oh, yeah, we—
- 02-00:24:51
L. Voorhies: Now that was covered pretty fair.
- 02-00:24:57
J. Voorhies: Oh, yes.
- 02-00:24:58
L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm. Yeah.
- 02-00:24:59
J. Voorhies: We knew even the name of the airplane, you know.
- 02-00:25:02
L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.

- 02-00:25:03
J. Voorhies: And we knew—afterwards, shortly afterwards we knew that the ship that took the bomb over—it was the Indianapolis, I believe, the name of the cruiser. Which was sunk after the war was over. Because the Japanese submarine people didn't even know the war was over, and they sank it. That was the ship that took the bomb to where—
- 02-00:25:31
L. Voorhies: The airbase, yeah.
- 02-00:25:32
J. Voorhies: To the airbase where it was taken over by the Enola Gray. And we knew about this. And we were really tickled to death that they did it. Now, this is terrible. But we figured that—and the experts told us that it would take about a million lives to take Japan. Because those people fought unbelievable, just beyond comprehension. They—
- 02-00:26:00
L. Voorhies: Well, they fought to the death.
- 02-00:26:01
J. Voorhies: To the death, you know, absolutely.
- 02-00:26:02
L. Voorhies: I mean, that's why the kamikazes existed, so forth and so on.
- 02-00:26:06
J. Voorhies: Yeah, we—
- 02-00:26:07
L. Voorhies: It was an honor to be killed in battle.
- 02-00:26:10
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:26:11
L. Voorhies: Which, I don't think any of our boys feel that as strong.
- 02-00:26:17
J. Voorhies: No, no.
- 02-00:26:18
L. Voorhies: You're not there to be honored because you're going to die in battle. You're going to be there to live through the battle. And I think we knew the bomb was terrible and what it cost, but in lives, in basically the outcome of the war—
- 02-00:26:43
J. Voorhies: It stopped it.

02-00:26:45

L. Voorhies:

It came to a halt. And I think that was a good thing. I really do. I really think that it was a good thing. While in all of its horrible aspects, it was a good thing.

02-00:27:01

J. Voorhies:

During the war I knew men who had worked at Hanford, Washington, where they did work on the bomb, one way or another, getting the heavy water and such. And some of these men came to the shipyards. They had worked up there. And there were some pipe welders. And they'd work on a pipeline in this big building, and they would get to a certain spot and stop, and they were laid off. They didn't know what they were doing. They just knew they were welding pipe. But they didn't know why. Well, we didn't know either what they were doing up there. It was a well kept secret. And it wasn't until after the war or at least tail end of the war that we even knew what they were doing up there. Some of those things were so well kept that the workers only would work a little while on a job, and they were laid off, and new people came in.

02-00:28:07

L. Voorhies:

I often wonder, if an all-out war would break out today—our correspondents, our media, needs the answers to everything, now. “I don't want it in an hour, at a press conference. I want it now.” Do we need to know everything? Or should it be left to the few to make decisions that are critical instead of the pressure of the media and the people? After all, a people's what demand what the media gives them. I mean, if we knew that we couldn't turn on that TV this afternoon and find out what occurred in the Bay Area, well, we wouldn't turn it on probably. But who's asked for it? Everybody's intent on it, live on it. We want to know instantly what's going on, even in Iraq, to the point of where maybe it isn't the best thing that everybody knows everything, or everybody has to be informed now. I don't know. What do you think?

02-00:29:40

J. Voorhies:

[laughs] Well, I always read history —

02-00:29:45

L. Voorhies:

Yeah. He's a buff. [laughs]

02-00:29:45

J. Voorhies:

—and biographies. And I still do. That's what I get on here. [gestures towards books on tape machine sitting on table next to sofa] And I don't know. I remember, during the war, when we would listen to the radio, and we used to listen to Edward R. Murrow, who called from London. And he went through the Blitz. And we used to listen to this. It was shortwave, but it would come over AM radio. And we were just—it was kind of exciting. And it wasn't falling on us. It was falling on the Brits. You know. But it was just so almost unbelievable that these things were happening. Yeah. I remember.

02-00:30:45

L. Voorhies: But then you look back at the people, the newsreels especially, with the vivid—because the picture of these things have an awful lot more to do than a radio did.

02-00:30:57

J. Voorhies: Oh, yeah. Words.

02-00:31:01

L. Voorhies: An actual visual. That has made it so vivid—and the television—in so many ways. We knew it, but, when we would see the actual ruins of the bomb. But then we would see the stamina of the people of Britain, that would pick up their lives and go on and resist and go to the shelter night after night after night to live through the bombings. You grew to respect them for their—everybody wants to survive. That's a part of living, even at our age. Why do you think we take so many pills every day?

02-00:31:51

J. Voorhies: [laughs]

02-00:31:53

L. Voorhies: It isn't alone by the grace of God.

02-00:31:56

J. Voorhies: Yeah. It's pills—pills.

02-00:31:57

L. Voorhies: If it wasn't for Kaiser and the doctors and the pills—but we want to live. The point of surviving is so deeply implanted in the human being. You have no idea how long that lasts.

02-00:32:15

Wilmot: Hmm.

02-00:32:17

L. Voorhies: Yeah, it does.

02-00:32:18

Wilmot: I have a question for you. I have another question, which is going back to the wartime. I have another question going back to the wartimes. I wanted to ask you who was Norm?

02-00:32:32

L. Voorhies: Oh! Who was Norman?

02-00:32:34

J. Voorhies: Norman? Well, I worked in a supermarket —

02-00:32:38

L. Voorhies: In Denver.

02-00:32:39

J. Voorhies: —and he was what we called a caddy. He was a helper. And he later became a checker, like I was. And because we were working in this supermarket, and he was going to welding school, too and because we had to work almost rotating shifts—we would say that on Monday we were going to work at 8:00, and on Tuesday we were scheduled to go in at 11:00 and work until 8:00 in the evening. The stores were closed on Sundays, of course. So that we quit that store, the three of us did, and we went down to another market that just operated daylight hours, so that we could continue to go to welding school. Well, Norm was a—I won't say he was an orphan. But he was raised by an aunt. And he kind of became a family member. In fact, he lived with us off and on, not only during the war but after the war, for a number of years.

02-00:33:45

L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm. He never married until way after the war.

02-00:33:50

J. Voorhies: Oh, no, not—yeah. And, my goodness, he took our kids fishing and hunting and all kinds of outdoor, out stuff. And Norm passed away at a very young age. He was in his 40's, I think, when he died. About 1962 or -3, something like that. But that was a big shock for us, of course.

02-00:34:17

L. Voorhies: He became like a younger brother to us basically.

02-00:34:19

J. Voorhies: Yeah. Yeah.

02-00:34:21

Wilmot: He was your best friend?

02-00:34:24

L. Voorhies: Yes. Yeah. Best friend? Mmm hmm.

02-00:34:29

J. Voorhies: Oh, yeah!

02-00:34:30

L. Voorhies: Oh, yeah.

02-00:34:31

Wilmot: Okay.

02-00:34:31

J. Voorhies: Yeah. Even after he left here—

02-00:34:36

L. Voorhies: He went to Sacramento.

- 02-00:34:38
 J. Voorhies: Yeah. He bought a new car every year, just about. [laughter] Every time we saw him he had a new one. And, yeah. We used to stop and see him. He had a card room and a pool hall, for a number of years, before he re—well, up until he died, didn't he?
- 02-00:34:59
 L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.
- 02-00:35:01
 J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:35:02
 Wilmot: Okay.
- 02-00:35:02
 L. Voorhies: All three of our boys have served in the services. The youngest one and the oldest one were in the Air Force. The middle son was in the Navy. And, in fact, right now Gene, the youngest one, retired from the Air Force and is now working with a firm that has an agreement with the Homeland Security. He was an airplane mechanic. And he has worked still with that. So we were both very proud to have three sons enlist with their own, not particularly by our urging at all. None of them seemed eager for further education. [speaking of Jamie] He would have loved to have had a son to go on to college. I know that. Because his desire was to go to college and become a history professor, basically. And that's what he wanted to do. So he would have loved it. But it didn't pan out for our boys. And we've both said that we didn't care what they did, as long as they were happy and enjoyed doing what they do. And so what they both—all of them decided to enlist out of high school, practically. The youngest one didn't. He worked a couple of years. And then he went into the Air Force. But the two younger ones enlisted right out of high school, in fact, while they were still seniors in high school.
- 02-00:36:53
 Wilmot: And one of your sons now works for Chevron here in Richmond, or Shell?
- 02-00:36:56
 L. Voorhies: The one son worked at Chevron. He came out of the Navy due to a heart problem that we didn't know he had, after—he was to go to sonar school. And he was in New London, Connecticut. And they discovered a heart murmur. And he came out of there on an honorable, of course, medical discharge. But no payment, but out, okay. And he went, worked for Chevron. And he remained with Chevron all the years, until about seven, eight years ago now.
- 02-00:37:35
 J. Voorhies: 31 years he worked.
- 02-00:37:37
 L. Voorhies: Mm?

- 02-00:37:37
J. Voorhies: He worked 31 years.
- 02-00:37:38
L. Voorhies: 31 years with Chevron. He took an early package and is now retired also.
- 02-00:37:44
Wilmot: Okay.
- 02-00:37:45
L. Voorhies: And, of course, the oldest son is 65 this year, so he's retired. And the youngest one is the one that I said is still working.
- 02-00:37:55
Wilmot: How many grandchildren do you have? How many grandchildren?
- 02-00:37:59
L. Voorhies: We have—oh, gosh. We have how many grandchildren? Let's see. One, two—isn't that awful I can't say if offhand?
- 02-00:38:11
Wilmot: It's okay.
- 02-00:38:11
L. Voorhies: One, two, three —
- 02-00:38:12
J. Voorhies: Two—five!
- 02-00:38:13
L. Voorhies: Five. Five grandchildren.
- 02-00:38:15
Wilmot: Wonderful!
- 02-00:38:15
L. Voorhies: And we have four great-grandchildren.
- 02-00:38:26
Wilmot: Wonderful.
- 02-00:38:27
L. Voorhies: And that's about it.
- 02-00:38:31
J. Voorhies: Mmm hmm. Got a new one, just this year—or last year. How old is he now?
- 02-00:38:37
L. Voorhies: Oh, she's only—let's see—she's six, seven months now.
- 02-00:38:41
J. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.

- 02-00:38:42
L. Voorhies: Unh huh.
- 02-00:38:44
Wilmot: Well, my next question is back to wartime. When you lived in the units, was everyone who lived there—were they all white families?
- 02-00:38:56
L. Voorhies: In our particular unit, yes, we were all white families. Right?
- 02-00:39:03
J. Voorhies: Far as I remember, yes
- 02-00:39:05
L. Voorhies: Yes, as far as I remember, we were.
- 02-00:39:06
J. Voorhies: It wasn't segregated—
- 02-00:39:07
L. Voorhies: No. No.
- 02-00:39:08
J. Voorhies: —in that sense, I don't think.
- 02-00:39:09
L. Voorhies: No, no.
- 02-00:39:10
J. Voorhies: I don't know how they allotted the things. I put my name in on a list.
- 02-00:39:16
L. Voorhies: No, we don't know how they chose you to be in a certain unit.
- 02-00:39:18
J. Voorhies: No, we don't know that.
- 02-00:39:19
L. Voorhies: You know, color never has bothered either one of us.
- 02-00:39:29
J. Voorhies: No.
- 02-00:39:32
L. Voorhies: We look deeper than the skin. I've got some very lovely, dear friends that are black. We have the Japanese. We have the German, the Pole. It never was a necessity thing with—We never grew up feeling racial. At least —
- 02-00:39:56
J. Voorhies: No.

02-00:39:56

L. Voorhies:

—I didn't. And I was from a big city, where you would have thought perhaps that might be so. But Colorado had a lot of foreigners working the beet fields, so forth and so on. We had a great black community. In fact, my folks' first home was in a community like that. And our neighbors, a couple of them, were black.

02-00:40:26

J. Voorhies:

Mmm hmm.

02-00:40:26

L. Voorhies:

There was never any racial thing.

02-00:40:29

J. Voorhies:

And we never had —

02-00:40:30

L. Voorhies:

During the war, no. And during the war I think we had one effort and one purpose. One was for jobs, and the other was to do something for the country. And that's all that mattered.

02-00:40:42

J. Voorhies:

Yeah. We weren't people to—we never drank. We didn't go to nightclubs, as such. And we certainly didn't hang out in bars. So a lot of the world passed us by, that we didn't know anything about.

02-00:40:56

L. Voorhies:

Oh, yes.

02-00:40:59

J. Voorhies:

But I don't remember of any problems. I remember that we had some people—and I can tell this story—there was a Southern couple, two brothers. Today they would be referred to as rednecks. He was a preacher. But he was working in the shipyards. And there was a young black—there weren't any welders that were black. Not on graveyard, anyway. And this young man, a young black man, was working day shift. And so I occasionally would see him as he came in, as I would go out. And I talk—speak to him. And one day this—I've forgotten the guy's name—but this preacher said, "Is he one of your kin?" And this just burnt me to death, you know. "No, he's not one of my kin." He was a friend, you know. And that was the only one that I can recall —

02-00:42:05

L. Voorhies:

Any incident.

02-00:42:06

J. Voorhies:

—of all the times that we knew. There weren't any—I have a picture upstairs of all the people in the pipe shop, at that particular time. This would vary from day to day. And there wasn't any black ones in it. I don't know whether or not they were prevented from being on graveyard shift. I don't know whether—

- 02-00:42:37
L. Voorhies: We don't know whether there was any segregation among—
- 02-00:42:40
J. Voorhies: No, we don't know.
- 02-00:42:40
L. Voorhies: —the hiring procedure.
- 02-00:42:41
J. Voorhies: No. There was a lot of them on days.
- 02-00:42:42
L. Voorhies: The only thing, I'll say this. Improving the black situation that has occurred now, I don't think they were given the opportunity—
- 02-00:43:01
J. Voorhies: Oh, no.
- 02-00:43:02
L. Voorhies: —to go to welding school. They were not given the opportunity to be engineers, to all the things. And therefore I have a feeling—and I don't know—that most of the black ones who were hired for the shipyards were laborers, who could do the hard work of whatever it took but not actually skilled. And that is—was the fault of our systems, undoubtedly, then that there was a class distinguish.
- 02-00:43:34
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:43:37
J. Voorhies: Oh, sure.
- 02-00:43:38
L. Voorhies: Only we didn't realize it.
- 02-00:43:40
J. Voorhies: Yeah. Oh—
- 02-00:43:40
L. Voorhies: You know what I mean? You grow up with that.
- 02-00:43:42
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:43:42
L. Voorhies: Even today there is still a kind of a class distinguish. No one wants to admit that. But there is.
- 02-00:43:50
J. Voorhies: Yeah.

02-00:43:51

L. Voorhies: And this has been known forever and a day.

02-00:43:56

J. Voorhies: We were fortunate that, at the hospital, our director of the volunteers is a black lady, and which we think a great deal of. And there's a lot of the other volunteers—there's probably more black volunteers than there are white now, isn't there?

02-00:44:12

L. Voorhies: Well, depending, yes.

02-00:44:15

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

02-00:44:15

L. Voorhies: Because a lot of the jobs that—

02-00:44:17

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

02-00:44:17

L. Voorhies: —they assume—and, of course, now there are as many on the skilled side as we are.

02-00:44:25

J. Voorhies: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

02-00:44:26

L. Voorhies: It's changed a great deal.

02-00:44:28

Wilmot: I have—sorry. Go ahead. I'm listening. [pause]

02-00:44:36

J. Voorhies: Hm?

02-00:44:40

L. Voorhies: I don't know.

02-00:44:41

J. Voorhies: I don't know what you said.

02-00:44:42

Wilmot: Nothing.

02-00:44:42

J. Voorhies: Oh.

02-00:44:43

Wilmot: Go ahead.

- 02-00:44:43
 L. Voorhies: She wants you to talk.
- 02-00:44:44
 J. Voorhies: Go ahead? No, I don't think—racist stuff just didn't occur. Maybe it was because they didn't have a chance to say anything. I don't know. I don't know about that. I was—I'd never seen but one or two black people in my life until I went to Denver.
- 02-00:45:05
 L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm. No, they were not farmers.
- 02-00:45:08
 J. Voorhies: I had never seen a Mexican.
- 02-00:45:10
 L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.
- 02-00:45:10
 J. Voorhies: Everybody where I came from was either Dutch, English, German, and there was a few French, and that was about it. There were some Poles. And that was it, from where I was born and raised. There were no black kids in school when I went to school. And I doubt that there are any now. There might be, but I doubt it. My brother—
- 02-00:45:34
 L. Voorhies: I don't know, in Orchard. I doubt it.
- 02-00:45:36
 J. Voorhies: —still lives there, in the same town.
- 02-00:45:38
 L. Voorhies: I doubt it.
- 02-00:45:39
 J. Voorhies: And I went back for my 50th and 60th and 65th—wasn't it? Something like that?
- 02-00:45:46
 L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm. School reunion.
- 02-00:45:48
 J. Voorhies: Class reunion.
- 02-00:45:48
 L. Voorhies: [chuckles]
- 02-00:45:50
 J. Voorhies: And, of course, it was all white. And that's the way we were raised. And that's—and I never knew anything—I never—we had no racial distinction. I think we made fun of some of the Germans, when we were near them. And one kid that—when we were talking about Hitler—Wayne [Machelot?], he

was a German. He thought Hitler was a—this is when we were in high school. We had great arguments, lasted all night. And he thought Hitler was the second coming, you know. But he joined the Army and fought during the war. Yeah.

02-00:46:25

L. Voorhies: [chuckles] You never talked to him after that, though, to know what he thought of him then, then, did you?

02-00:46:41

J. Voorhies: No. [laughter] No, no. I—

02-00:46:43

L. Voorhies: No.

02-00:46:43

J. Voorhies: He was going to the University of Nebraska and either was drafted, or he joined up. And he was a lieutenant in the Army.

02-00:46:53

Wilmot: So when you moved here to the Bay Area, and there was all this change happening, with black people coming from the South—

02-00:47:03

L. Voorhies: Yes. Oh, yes!

02-00:47:05

Wilmot: —that was a different experience, then.

02-00:47:06

L. Voorhies: Oh, yes! I don't know the population of the blacks, we'll say, in Richmond, before the war. But after the input of all these workers coming, changed the balance of where people lived. We'll go even to New Orleans area, which is mainly black. They didn't venture out into other areas. They were content. But that brought them elsewhere. And so you become exposed. It's also in the way you're raised, and especially nowadays. Respect. We were raised with respect. We respected the black. We respected an oriental. We respected our parents first. Then our police, we respected. Our teachers, we respected. And once our morals, or whatever you want to call them, sway to where you lose respect—and I'll go first with the family, with your parents. Then you go on up into teachers, to outsiders, to employers, and go on down the line. Then it becomes an issue that we didn't have to deal with.

02-00:48:55

J. Voorhies: Yeah, we were real good. We didn't have any money, so, even if there'd been dope, we couldn't have bought it because we didn't have any money. And I don't remember of any drugs. Although we had wild marijuana growing in Nebraska—

- 02-00:49:12
Wilmot: Mmm hmm.
- 02-00:49:12
J. Voorhies: —called locoweed. And, of course, it was during our growing up there was Prohibition. So we didn't have beer or any wines or anything like that. And so we were pretty fortunate that we weren't exposed to a lot of things that the kids are now. And I'm glad my—I worry a little about my grandkids. But I'm glad my sons are kind of over the hump.
- 02-00:49:44
Wilmot: Mmm hmm.
- 02-00:49:45
J. Voorhies: And she didn't mention that our youngest one had 20 years in the Air Force.
- 02-00:49:50
L. Voorhies: Yeah. I said retired.
- 02-00:49:51
J. Voorhies: Yeah, I know, retired. But then, you can retire at 40 years.
- 02-00:49:55
L. Voorhies: Oh.
- 02-00:49:55
Wilmot: One last question or more questions on wartime is, did you know of any, like—? Were there any people who were openly gay, openly?
- 02-00:50:06
L. Voorhies: Oh, no!
- 02-00:50:07
J. Voorhies: No.
- 02-00:50:08
L. Voorhies: No. No, we never knew—
- 02-00:50:11
Wilmot: People who—
- 02-00:50:11
L. Voorhies: —anything about that.
- 02-00:50:12
J. Voorhies: No. We had —
- 02-00:50:14
L. Voorhies: Gender was never mentioned. I'll go into my own family. I had a cousin. And I knew, all of my life—Kathryn was what we call a tomboy. She played a slide trombone. She liked softball. She—all of those things. And it wasn't until

way after the war that it became known to my mother that she was a lesbian.
But I never knew the word!

02-00:50:59

J. Voorhies: No.

02-00:51:00

L. Voorhies: We never knew there were such things. All of those things that were kind of swept under a carpet.

02-00:51:11

J. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.

02-00:51:12

L. Voorhies: Nobody—even a drunk or a gambler. Anything that was negative was more or less put aside.

02-00:51:23

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

02-00:51:23

L. Voorhies: You don't talk about that. Especially in your families. So it was never out there. I never knew. In fact, when we were first married, and some of the jokes that came up about it, I didn't even know what they were talking about! [laughs]

02-00:51:40

J. Voorhies: That's right!

02-00:51:42

L. Voorhies: No. We were more or less very protected.

02-00:51:46

J. Voorhies: Yeah. During the war I knew—there was a welder on another crew. He wasn't a pipe welder, but he was a welder. And I knew he was different. But I didn't know what it was until somebody one day told me that he was gay. Or they didn't use that term then.

02-00:52:05

L. Voorhies: No. What did they use then? Can't remember.

02-00:52:07

J. Voorhies: And it was the only one that I ever knew. He didn't do anything, or bother me any. But he just acted different than most men did. And that was the only one that I ever knew anything about. And a lot of those things, like she mentioned, just didn't happen. We have friends now, two ladies that lived together nearby here—they've moved since—that were great, just great people.

02-00:52:39

L. Voorhies: Wonderful! Best neighbors we've had in years.

- 02-00:52:41
J. Voorhies: Yeah, and when she worked at Capwells they had —
- 02-00:52:46
L. Voorhies: We had hairdr—
- 02-00:52:46
J. Voorhies: —set decorators.
- 02-00:52:47
L. Voorhies: We had hairdressers, many of them, that were. And we knew then, yes, when it was knowledgeable. But all those things, in the years when we were growing up—
- 02-00:53:03
J. Voorhies: They didn't know.
- 02-00:53:03
L. Voorhies: No.
- 02-00:53:04
J. Voorhies: No.
- 02-00:53:04
L. Voorhies: Unh unh.
- 02-00:53:05
J. Voorhies: No. No.
- 02-00:53:06
L. Voorhies: No, we didn't know about it.
- 02-00:53:06
J. Voorhies: No. No.
- 02-00:53:08
L. Voorhies: Jamie had an uncle that became a dope addict, due to a medical situation. But it was kind of—
- 02-00:53:16
J. Voorhies: Great uncle.
- 02-00:53:16
L. Voorhies: Was it a great—? Great uncle.
- 02-00:53:19
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:53:19
L. Voorhies: Kind of swept under the carpet. He didn't know why, but he knew he didn't act right, you know. But, no, all those negative things we were more or less protected from.

- 02-00:53:32
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:53:32
L. Voorhies: Or, and another was "You shouldn't." "You don't." "That's against our rules--"
- 02-00:53:41
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:53:42
L. Voorhies: —our principles. And so you grew up—. It's like even my youngest son said to me, "Mom, when I was in high school, drugs were available to me. But you raised me thinking—I grew up thinking, 'What would my parents think of me if I used drugs?;' What would my friends—our people, friends, "think of me if they knew I used drug?'" He said, "The fear of what other people would make me—"
- 02-00:54:15
J. Voorhies: Oh, sure.
- 02-00:54:16
L. Voorhies: "—refrained me from using 'em.' And that seems to be gone now. There isn't the fear of stigma. [stigma?] Divorce. We didn't talk about divorce. In our growing up period families lived together come thick or thin. Come hell or high water—
- 02-00:54:36
J. Voorhies: They should have divorced. Some of them should have.
- 02-00:54:37
L. Voorhies: —I think was the thing. And the women were shunned. If there was a divorce, it was scandalous! I mean, you just didn't do that. So it became something that you didn't do. And in Jamie's family, an aunt of his lived with a man that she should have divorced—
- 02-00:55:00
J. Voorhies: Well, Edna did divorce.
- 02-00:55:01
L. Voorhies: —years before. Well, years before. Because he verbally and physically abused her. But it wasn't done then. So she survived it, until very, very late in life.
- 02-00:55:15
J. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:55:15
L. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:55:16
Wilmot: I have a question also—I have two more questions for you. One is for you.

02-00:55:22

L. Voorhies: Huh?

02-00:55:22

Wilmot: You had talked about—we had talked about like basic—right before we turned on the camera we talked about, like, feminism and women's lib. What did you say about it then? Do you want to—?

02-00:55:40

L. Voorhies: In a way, in my instance, that I analyze a lot of today's problems, is the true values of a true family. A true family begins, in my estimation, of why God put woman on this earth was to bear children, to be a mother, to be a guiding, a leading icon for their children. I think we always felt that way. We were told no from the time—that was one of the first words that we were told, was no. When you weren't to touch something or whatever. We were given rules and regulations. We were punished, to a degree. Not cruelly. But we were given punishment if we disobeyed those rules. One was—I remember vividly—the only time I remember my father really giving me a lot of punishment was—and I was probably in junior—no, maybe grade school, what—latter part. And I was allowed to trick or treat on Halloween. And he told me I could go up one side of the block and down the other, and that was all. But I didn't come home right away. Well, we had gone around the corner and done the other street. And so, when I come in the door, he said, "Where'd you trick or treat?" "Just down the street." "You're sure?" "Yeah." Well, he knew differently. He had followed and knew where we were. But I lied to him. And so he took me in the bathroom and took a bar of soap, put it in my mouth, and scraped the soap off in my mouth, for lying.

02-00:57:43

J. Voorhies: [chuckles]

02-00:57:43

L. Voorhies: I never lied to my father again. That's the severest punishment that I ever had, I think, from him.

But this is now that, when women—I agree. I worked at a very low-paying scale, in a workforce for women, when I was a typist at Wards. But I was glad to have it. I was thankful for a job. I didn't want to be a CEO or to earn as much as that guy sitting over there at a desk. In those days we grew up—everybody wanted our job, if we didn't. Because there were so many unemployed, and so forth and so on. So you did your best for your employer. Because you wanted that job. Or you were thankful that you had that job. So it became a different aspect now than it is now. And when women begin to demand more and leave the home more—and things became more important, status of life became more important, I think the values of raising the children has changed the morality of our youth. I really and truly do.

02-00:59:21

Wilmot: I never asked you. What faith were you raised?

- 02-00:59:25
L. Voorhies: What?
- 02-00:59:25
Wilmot: What faith were you raised? What is your —?
- 02-00:59:27
L. Voorhies: What faith?
- 02-00:59:28
Wilmot: Unh huh.
- 02-00:59:29
L. Voorhies: Presbyterian.
- 02-00:59:29
Wilmot: You're Presbyterian?
- 02-00:59:30
L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm. Mmm hmm.
- 02-00:59:31
Wilmot: And you, as well? What faith?
- 02-00:59:33
L. Voorhies: He had very little —
- 02-00:59:36
Wilmot: Church.
- 02-00:59:36
L. Voorhies: —religious—you were not raised religious. No.
- 02-00:59:41
J. Voorhies: No. I joined a—we went to church occasionally when I was a kid. But when I went to Denver, before I met her, the man that I worked for —
- 02-00:59:51
L. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 02-00:59:52
J. Voorhies: —I joined his church.
- 02-00:59:54
L. Voorhies: And he was Presbyterian.
- 02-00:59:55
J. Voorhies: And I joined—until we left Denver, I still —
- 02-00:59:58
L. Voorhies: Yeah.

- 02-00:59:59
J. Voorhies: That was a—
- 02-01:00:00
L. Voorhies: Yeah, we were with [Steege?] Church down here in Richmond.
- 02-01:00:03
J. Voorhies: Oh, that —
- 02-01:00:04
L. Voorhies: Steege Presbyterian. That was a very active church during the war. And we belonged there. Jamie's mother was Christian Science. My mother and father were both raised Protestant and were Presbyterians, both of them, very prominent in the church.
- 02-01:00:27
Wilmot: And also, what kind of work did you do after the war?
- 02-01:00:30
J. Voorhies: Well—
- 02-01:00:30
L. Voorhies: What have you done since the war? [laughs]
- 02-01:00:32
J. Voorhies: Well, after the war jobs—well, I can go back just a little bit. I stayed at the shipyards until they closed up or until they got rid of me. Because the rumors going around was that Richmond was going to produce ships—continue to build ships. Which they didn't. But we thought they would. Because I wanted to continue to work in the shipyards. Well, after the war I—
- 02-01:01:01
Wilmot: Why did you want to continue to work in the shipyards?
- 02-01:01:04
J. Voorhies: Hm?
- 02-01:01:06
L. Voorhies: Why did you want to stay in the shipyard?
- 02-01:01:06
J. Voorhies: Because I liked it.
- 02-01:01:08
L. Voorhies: Mmm hmm.
- 02-01:01:08
J. Voorhies: I loved building things. I really did.
- 02-01:01:11
L. Voorhies: Maybe that's—

02-01:01:11

J. Voorhies: I really liked the work. And I liked the—oh, I liked to go down in the bottom of the basins and look at a ship, you know. And I liked every aspect of it. It was smoky, and it was noisy, and it was a lot of things bad, but I put up with that. So—but that didn't happen. So after the war I worked at various jobs. And eventually I went—I had a withdrawal card from the retail clerks. And I worked a year in El Portal, at Lucky's store. And then I joined the Steamfitters' Union. And that was a bad thing because there wasn't enough work. And I worked out of town. I worked at Fontana for Kaiser Engineers.

02-01:02:02

L. Voorhies: That was all welding jobs.

02-01:02:04

J. Voorhies: And it was—yeah. And then after that, in 1950, in one of the old shipyard buildings—

02-01:02:12

Wilmot: Would you stop, one second? I have to change everything.

02-01:02:17

L. Voorhies: Got to change—

02-01:02:17

J. Voorhies: Oh.

Begin Audio File voornies 3.mp3

(03-00:00:00 through 03-01:02:13 repeats 02-00:00:00 through 02-01:02:13.)

03-01:02:15

J. Voorhies: Okay? I went to work for—because I'd had various jobs, and [chuckles] times were pretty tough because there were millions of people out of work again. And I went to work for Butler Manufacturing, who had a factory here in Richmond in an old shipyard building. And I worked there 21 years.

03-01:02:41

Wilmot: What did you do for them?

03-01:02:42

J. Voorhies: I was a welder. And they moved out—

03-01:02:47

L. Voorhies: [to Wilmot] Do you want a soda or water or something? No? Okay.

03-01:02:47

J. Voorhies: —and moved to Visalia and wanted me to go to work down in Visalia. But I didn't. And I had better jobs afterwards, and I worked steady. But I came out

here, and I worked for Kaiser. I went down South and worked for Kaiser, another branch of Kaiser, in Fontana in the 40's. And then I ended up working for Kaiser in Vallejo, building offshore drilling rigs. And we built the piers that are at Valdez, for the shipping, in—what is the name of that sound where the Valdez ship hit the rock?

03-01:03:41

L. Voorhies: Oh, gosh.

03-01:03:42

J. Voorhies: I can't think of it. Prince Edward? No, not Prince Edward.

03-01:03:45

L. Voorhies: Unh unh. No.

03-01:03:47

J. Voorhies: Well anyway, in 1962 we built a camper. And '63, I put it on a new truck, and we went to Alaska.

03-01:03:57

Wilmot: As a family?

03-01:03:58

L. Voorhies: Yup.

03-01:03:59

J. Voorhies: And this—we had two boys and a—

03-01:04:01

L. Voorhies: And a dog. [chuckling]

03-01:04:02

J. Voorhies: —Springer spaniel. And our oldest boy was in the Air Force up there. We came back and had enough money left over—we came back, and we rode the ferry, which was brand new then, the Alaska ferry system. And we came from Haines, Alaska, to Prince Rupert, British Columbia. And then that was as far as the ferry came down. And then we had to drive across the mountains to Prince George and then back down to Vancouver and down home. That was our first major trip—our first trip out of the country.

In '72 I was working at a place in Oakland and—because I lost my job here from Butler in 1971. I was 54. And I was pretty disgusted with the world. So we're going to do traveling now as much as we can. And there was a man who was a machinist in the shop where I was working, who was on his vacation. And he was in Europe. And I found out later that he was a German who was born in Poland, and who had come to the U.S. and became a citizen. And he was sworn in under the Kennedys. And these people—he has since passed away, but we see her occasionally. And if I joined a—or we—when I say I, that means we joined a German-American club, it would allow us to fly charters. It cost \$5 to join the club. And it allowed us to fly a charter. And we

took a trip to Europe in 1972. And the only thing we had was BritRail and Eurail, which you had to buy here. And we traveled Europe and Britain for a month. Well, this really got us into the bug.

03-01:06:19

L. Voorhies: We never knew where we were going to stay—

03-01:06:22

J. Voorhies: No.

03-01:06:23

L. Voorhies: —where we were going to get off the train. You had no reservations. We knew nothing. We spoke no language. I had a little bit of high school French. That was it. And we had some wonderful experiences.

03-01:06:39

J. Voorhies: And some we wouldn't want to repeat.

03-01:06:40

L. Voorhies: All on our own. But some were really experiences, also. [laughs]

03-01:06:45

J. Voorhies: Yeah.

03-01:06:46

L. Voorhies: Yeah. No, it was a wonderful trip. But that started us, the travel bug.

03-01:06:51

J. Voorhies: Yeah. We've been—without going through all of them, we've been on, I think, ten or 12 cruises. And we went on a tour of—a Saga tour we went on. We flew from L.A. to Copenhagen and then to Stockholm and then took a ferry to Finland. And stayed on the bus and went through Russia and Estonia and Latvia and Lithuania. And back into Poland. And then to East Germany.

We were in East Germany two days or three days before—I mean East Berlin—two or three days before it became one Germany. And we chipped off—

03-01:07:40

L. Voorhies: The Berlin Wall.

03-01:07:41

J. Voorhies: --Berlin Wall. Which we've got upstairs. And we came—we had another tour. We toured the British Isles—

03-01:07:53

L. Voorhies: And the fjords.

03-01:07:53

J. Voorhies: —on a tour.

- 03-01:07:55
L. Voorhies: Went up the fjords in Norway.
- 03-01:07:58
J. Voorhies: And that was the last trip. Yeah.
- 03-01:07:59
L. Voorhies: Yeah.
- 03-01:08:00
Wilmot: Briefly, at this time, can you, just so people know, who are watching this video, can you tell briefly what your eye situation is?
- 03-01:08:13
L. Voorhies: Oh, yes. All right. She wants you to tell about our eyes.
- 03-01:08:18
J. Voorhies: Oh.
- 03-01:08:19
L. Voorhies: Well, let's see. Well, I'll start off first. We knew what macular degeneration was. Jamie's mother had that for years. And about close to five years ago now, I had a cataract. And I went to see Dr. [Batchelder?] down here at Kaiser. And I described my symptoms. And he said, "Well, you have a cataract." But he said, "One of the other symptoms that you have —" which is a straight line no longer was straight. It might have like a dip in it. And he said, "That isn't a cataract." So after he removed the cataract, he determined that I had the beginning of macular degeneration—which is one of the symptoms. Referred me to Dr. Harrison in ophthalmology in Oakland, who began to treat my problem with cold laser treatments. Macular degeneration is a series of small blood vessels that weep—don't actually rupture, but they weep fluid into the retina, which destroys your eyesight. And she uses the cold laser treatment to more or less cauterize or destroy these little weeping veins that are weeping in the eye. It does not cure what's wrong, bring back anything. But it deters the progress of macular degeneration.
- Jamie had what they called the dry kind—which, there is no weepage—for a couple of years. Then, all of a sudden, his started to be the wet kind also. So now we have been under her care this long time. We now can no longer read without the use of a magnifying glass. We have the California library talking books. He has one down here, and I have my machine upstairs. Because I listen to a different type of books than he listens to. And then that is basically the way we get our reading material done now. We scan the newspaper, as yet. We have trouble now—we got a large TV, the last couple of years, to help us when he wants to watch a ballgame, and he wants to know what inning it is and the status of it and the printout. He couldn't read.
- 03-01:11:41
J. Voorhies: That's why that chair is here.

- 03-01:11:42
 Wilmot: Mmm hmm.
- 03-01:11:43
 L. Voorhies: So we got a big one.
- 03-01:11:44
 J. Voorhies: Get closer and closer.
- 03-01:11:45
 L. Voorhies: We kept getting closer and closer. And we use the large lamps to read by now. Anything with a contrast is good, dark on white. Colors aren't like they were. You have this trouble distinguishing black from brown, tones of—well, we'll go with anything in the tone shade, from pinks to ecru to whatever—are very difficult to distinguish. We lost, of course—I asked my eye doctor one day, "Should I be driving?" And she said, "Well, not legally." Well, then I said, "Dr. Harrison, I won't drive again." I said, "I'll tell you why I asked that question." And my driving, I loved it. It was so relaxing to get in the car and go. We did that constantly. Didn't matter where it was. Pack a lunch and take an off road, and away we go. Time after time. So when I begin to guess, "Is that a person standing there, or is that a garbage disposal?" when I begin to guess what I was seeing, I thought, "Something is wrong." And that's when I asked her that question. So then I quit driving. Well then, just it'll be—it was a year ago last October that he had to quit driving also —
- 03-01:13:35
 J. Voorhies: Yeah. Yeah.
- 03-01:13:36
 L. Voorhies: —for the same reason.
- 03-01:13:37
 J. Voorhies: I know the —
- 03-01:13:38
 L. Voorhies: We can no more read signs. Things are wavy. You don't get a true picture of what you're looking at. And driving wasn't fun then. When driving became tense, for me —
- 03-01:13:53
 J. Voorhies: We—
- 03-01:13:54
 L. Voorhies: —I knew something was wrong.
- 03-01:13:55
 Wilmot: Mmm hmm.
- 03-01:13:56
 L. Voorhies: And it was. So we—

- 03-01:13:58
 J. Voorhies: We—
- 03-01:13:58
 L. Voorhies: —quit driving. We're very blessed in that we have Bay Area Rapid Transit —
- 03-01:14:04
 Wilmot: Mmm hmm.
- 03-01:14:04
 L. Voorhies: —district tran—what do you call —
- 03-01:14:08
 Wilmot: BART.
- 03-01:14:09
 L. Voorhies: —transit now, para-transit. Right. They are marvelous. They pick us up, they take us where we need to go, for a very nominal fee. And we get around. Our son does anything that we ask him to do, take us, whatever. And I have a very dear friend who lives close by who takes me, every Friday morning, to—she shops at the same grocery store that I do. So I go and do my grocery shopping every Friday morning with her. So we're blessed in a lot of ways.
- 03-01:14:46
 Wilmot: Okay.
- 03-01:14:47
 L. Voorhies: But it's more difficult to maintain the household, to cook. I have trouble reading the recipes. I've tried to enlarge them, or I've memorized much of it, you know. But it's a disease. I'm sorry that—and then our hearing has gone, for both of us. And at the price of hearing aids now—he wore—
- 03-01:15:15
 J. Voorhies: I've had two sets of them.
- 03-01:15:17
 L. Voorhies: He's had two sets. And when they become such a terrible nuisance—for him to hear, he gave up. I know there's new things out there, but they cost in the thous—
- 03-01:15:30
 J. Voorhies: That's what they told us every time.
- 03-01:15:31
 L. Voorhies: —thousands of dollars now, for them. And at our age we're not that eager to invest in it. So we survive. [laughter]
- 03-01:15:42
 J. Voorhies: Yeah!

03-01:15:42

Wilmot: Okay. Well, I wanted to say thank you for having me over here to do this interview with you.

03-01:15:50

L. Voorhies: It's our pleasure. I think you're doing a very—I wish that some of my family could have told their stories —

03-01:16:01

J. Voorhies: Oh, yes!

03-01:16:03

L. Voorhies: —of their lives.

03-01:16:03

J. Voorhies: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

03-01:16:05

L. Voorhies: I've done a little bit—taking that diary to schools, to grade schools—and impressed upon the children, have your grandma sit down and tell you stories about her life. Have you got a history of something? Knowing your background, your ancestry, and the history, this is the only way that this life is going to be preserved. And we thank you for it.

03-01:16:38

Wilmot: Okay.

03-01:16:38

J. Voorhies: The bottom drawer in that desk has several dozen, I guess, diaries or logs that she has kept of our trips, so that, if we want to know what happened on a particular tour or a particular cruise, she can get the book out, and we'll look it up.

03-01:17:05

Wilmot: That's beautiful.

03-01:17:05

J. Voorhies: She even writes down what we eat.

03-01:17:07

L. Voorhies: [laughs]

03-01:17:08

Wilmot: Yeah. Because you want to remember those things. Thanks, you guys. I'm turning this off. Okay.