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Pauline Marie Hairston

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I, Pauline Clark Hairston do hereby give to the Oral History of Appalachia Program of Marshall University, the tape recordings and transcripts of my interview(s) on March 8, 2003.

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Tracie A. Mullan
(Agent of the Oral History Program)

Pauline C. Hairston
(Donor)

March 8, 2003
(Date)

[This interview sounds like it was a telephone interview, hence, the reason for sections of inaudible conversation.]

My name is Vickie Gillium and this is March 8th, 2003. I am in Charleston, West Virginia, conducting an oral history interview with my mother, Pauline Hairston, who is a wife and mother on the home front during World War II.

Tell me your name, where you're from, and a little bit about your family.

My name is Pauline Marie Clark Hairston. I'm a negro woman who was born in 1923, [inaudible]... West Virginia, Putnam County. A small mining camp. My parents were Make Edward Patron Clark, Sr. My mother the late Madge Stevens Clark. I was an infant when we moved to Charleston, West Virginia. I am the second oldest child of ten children. I was educated in Kanawha County schools. The grade schools, which was named Dunbar. Moore Junior High School, Garnett High School.

Okay. Tell me a little bit about your husband. What was his name, where was he from, and also, a little bit about his family.

My husband's name was Lacey James Hairston. And he was born in 1920 in McDowell County. And that also was a small mining camp. His parents were the late Thaddeus Mitchell Hairston, and his mother was the late Sally Ann Dodson Hairston. And they moved to Charleston, West Virginia, in

1923, also, when he was just a young child. They also, he was...he was the second youngest of six children. And he attended Kanawha County school system also, the same schools, that I attended. And he was a graduate of Garnett High School.

And so, were you childhood friends?

Uh...we were childhood friends, but not...at a distance really. I would see him coming and going and things like that. He was two years older than I was. And I lived on Seventh Avenue at the time and he was living on Third Avenue when we were children. So our paths crossed as we got older. We'd be closer friends then.

Okay. Well, when did you get married?

Well, we were married in 1941. And uh, we're happily married. And our first child was born, Carolyn Fay, was born in 1942.

Where did you live?

We lived on Third Avenue and his father had built a duplex for his two sons. They were close together in uh, in age. And we both were married around about the same time. And I lived on one side of the duplex and his brother and his wife lived on the other side. And we, each of us had one child a piece. And it was in a nice community, Third Avenue. Our teachers that taught us in school lived in the same areas and there were doctors that I can remember that also had homes in the same

areas. It was a quiet neighborhood. And there was a couple of churches there, a small grocery store, [inaudible]...at the time, when we were growing up. But when we were married, then the community had began to [inaudible].

During that time, the war had already started. So uh, I know you had to deal with some rationing. What can you tell me about how rationing was enforced and some of the issues you all had to go through?

Well, the rationing were...were like, they would give you stamps or uhm...for gas and cars. But we didn't have a car at that time. So and you would get uh, certain...I guess you could call it cards for certain types.... We were short on sugar and whenever we would hear about sugar, we would all go racing to the store wherever it was to get sugar. And coffee was scarce. It was good, the prices had gone up and they had put a lot of chickory in it at times. Which didn't have a very good taste to it. At least I didn't care anything about it. So, I just didn't drink coffee during that time.

What about the clothing shortage?

Well, there were a few rations you had to have [inaudible].... The clothing, I wasn't too bothered about the clothing. I always made clothes—I was a seamstress—I could make my own clothes. And clothes for Carolyn. Pajamas and things like that. So the clothes didn't, the rationing of clothes didn't bother me, as long as I could get material to make things.

Well, what lines did you stand in when you did go through the rationing part of it? What else was rationed, besides some of the food?

Well, the rationing, some of the rationing that I experienced was after we had moved from the state to Delaware. Like standing in line for silks, for hose. Or cigarettes. I didn't smoke, but we was standing in long lines for our friends, and we would exchange stockings or whatever we had at our, so they could get, they would give me stockings and I'd let them have the cigarettes that I to stand in line for. That's the way-, because I didn't smoke, I didn't need the cigarettes. But I did need the hose.

Okay, what about the gas rationing? You mentioned something about that. Seems like that was more enforced.

Well, that was uh...that wasn't enforced. But we didn't have a car when we were, you know, in West Virginia, or in Delaware. So that didn't bother us that much.

But the people....

You had to, in order to get your, in order to get your gas, your rationing, your gas stamps, you had to have a car. They didn't just give those away. You had to prove that you needed those—they didn't just send you those. Not to my knowledge, they didn't.

Okay.

Of course, I wouldn't go so far as to say they definitely, definitely didn't, because we didn't own cars at the time. We rode a bus, which was pretty convenient, you know, wherever we wanted to go. That was, that wasn't too bad. We knew that we had to make a sacrifice for things during the war, so we just accepted it.

Okay. Well, you said you all went to Delaware. What made you move to Delaware?

Well, his oldest brother had moved to Wilmington, and he notified us that they were needing men there to work in the defense plant. Because they, at that time, they were taking so many young men and soldiers were drafted and sent off to war-, you know, during World War II. So they began taking them in large numbers and the shortage of manpower, they were trying to get help. So if you had a child at the time, they took the men first, that didn't have children. And then as it grew, the war grew worse, they began, toward the end, to draft the father's with children. So we went there seeking employment. Of which the pay was much better. And it was an opportunity to get into defense work and to help do something. It made you feel like you were doing your part for the country. My husband, after we moved there, he, at the Dravo Shipyard defense plant, where they made naval vessels for World War II. And he was a machinist, they trained him to be a machinist, and an electrician's helper. He [inaudible]...with his hands. They would, they had to go to classes and things to learn. Math classes was one of the major

things. I remember him saying that he [inaudible...tape skipping].... They needed machinists, they needed welders, they needed laborers, they needed men of all, they had all types of work during the war.

What kind of job did you get when you went to Delaware?

Well, when I went to Delaware, I decided that I wanted to work, so I only had the one child. And so I found a good babysitter for Carolyn. And I went to the uh, Delaware Mill, but it was really a rayon company where rayon was made. And I was hired there [inaudible],.... The negro women were hired to be the [inaudible]...type of unit. The work was very tedious and required rhythm and skill to [inaudible]... the rayon after it was made, [inaudible]...weighed about five pounds. And in order to get the uh...[inaudible-tape skipping]...you had to be tested. Whether you had strength enough in your right hand to take the roll of rayon that had been made in a ceramic bowl out without disturbing the silk. There was a way you could put your hand down inside of the rayon and you would have to [inaudible].... And you could not let not one string of the rayon be unraveled or you would destroy the spool, they couldn't use it. So you had to be skilled like that. If you could prove that you could do that, then they would train you to be a spinner. Which was fascinating. I really enjoyed that. It was a very dangerous job, though, because of the [inaudible]...we had to use in order to make the rayon. But, and you had to wear goggles, and you had to have gloves up to the elbow. And you had to have rubber [inaudible]...sturdy shoes and you had to wear long-

sleeved clothes. Because if any of the [inaudible]...would hit your arm or any part of your body, whenever you would try to get it off your skin, it would take the skin and all off! If it just stayed on there just a matter of minutes...it'd leave bad places on your body. And a lot of the girls would get sore eye from it. So they couldn't continue to work there. I didn't have sore eyes but one time. So I stayed there and I worked there for one year. But one thing that always troubled me was that the money, silver. If you took nickels to dimes to quarters, in the plant, they would turn very black. You couldn't hardly tell what type of money that it was, what it was, quarter, nickel, whatever. The pennies were very black. Well that troubled me because I wondered, you know, what that would do to the lungs or whatever. The fumes were very, you couldn't really smell them that bad. But I guess they were...they had to be in the atmosphere. The unit was to itself. The method of making it was very fascinating. I can't explain it exactly...[inaudible]...acid bath and then if the wheel that you put the strands on as they're going through the acid, it would be going on a wheel that was going very, very fast. And then you would use a dipper of the acid to pour down into a funnel that was constantly moving up and down very, very fast. And it would go for one hour and a half. And you had to-, they had to empty...each girl had a section that had ten spools, [inaudible]...that you had to keep going at all times. And if these, if these rayon would break, you had to lace it back into the funnel again. But it wasn't...it wasn't a difficult thing. You just had to use skill [inaudible]...careful with the acid and the [inaudible].... So I stayed there for a year. And then as the work began, as they began to lose more men and they began

to put more labor on, on...on us ladies, so I uh, resigned from the job.

And then what type of work did you do after that?

Well, after leaving, after they had the large carts with the [inaudible]...and it was about eight rows of the rayon on each tray, that was a lot of poundage to push from one unit to the other. And I really hated to leave, because I really loved that job. But I went to, immediately, [inaudible]...Airplane Factory. And that's when I became a riveter, riveting airplane doors. That was interesting, but we had to learn blueprinting before we did that, because you had to do a lot of math and things like that. But the noise, I stayed there for about nine months. I couldn't take that noise, that riveting noise. I did the airplane doors. But the noise, when you would get to riveting, it was very hard on the ear drums. So uh....

So you didn't have any ear protection?

No, you didn't have ear protection. We had severalI didn't notice any [inaudible].... But we had guards at the airplane [inaudible].... The one guard that we had, we would laugh about it sometimes, because he was German, and they were fighting Germans, and we were a little nervous. But he was nice. But it was just the idea that he was...the Germans kind of troubled us. [inaudible]...the way this war was going now, certain things trouble your mind. But uh, it was interesting. But the noise was bad. The noise was bad. So many riveters making all that racquet but it had to be done. So.... And, but

the reason I left that job was because my husband had gotten his orders to report for duty in the Navy. So...that automatically cut me out of a job. That was one of the reasons I left that job.

Well, where was he stationed?

Go ahead.

Where was he stationed?

I can't understand you.

Where was he stationed when he was sent to the Navy?

Oh, stationed in California. And the uh, his brother was a [inaudible]...and he was stationed in another part of California. But they were both in California.

What was your relationship like with your husband while he was gone to war? Did you write letters?

Oh, yes, I wrote letters to him every day. I was very lonely. Even with the baby. And I was expecting another one then. But I missed him so much, because he used to take care of everything, like the bills and other type things. And I would send him letters and he would always answer 'em back. He would answer [inaudible]...because he had not received a letter from me, the mail was slow. And sometimes they would, he would get four or five letters at one time. They, the mail

wasn't, you know, they didn't get it the week you would have liked for them to have gotten their mail. But he would read every one of them. He missed being home, too, but.... He enjoyed being in the service.

Well, how did you keep up the morale while he was gone?

How did...I don't understand.

How did you keep up your morale while he was gone?

Well, now, while he was gone, I wasn't the only mother there that their husband had left to go to service. We, our community was very, very close. We, the girls, all of us had gone to school together and people had moved away. They were just uh, close friends. We looked out for each other's children and things like that. That was after see, we moved back to Charleston in '44. But he was called to the service while we were in Wilmington. And uh, but the loneliness came after we moved back.

Right. So when he got his orders you moved back to Charleston...

Mmm-hmm.

...and then he left for war.

Yeah.

Okay. So you were back at home in Charleston where you were familiar with the people and your surroundings and had family for support?

Yes. That's what he wanted. He was...he was a wise person. He, we rented our duplex out to an elderly lady while we were gone. Because I think...he probably felt that he would be there for a time, and he wouldn't want to leave me there, you know. Even though his brother was there, you know, he didn't know how long he was going to be gone and things, so.... But we did come back to West Virginia. I had a place to go to—I stayed with his mother until the house was available, so.... It was available real soon. And uh, so that's...I think about that sometime now, that was wisdom to just do that.

Yes, it was. Well, now, did you have any other relatives in the war?

Yes, I had a brother that was in the war two years younger-, or he had younger than I was. But he wanted to go so bad, he just, they put his age up and signed, his dad signed the papers for him to go. He was almost seventeen.

Mmm-hmm. What was his name?

What did you say?

What was his name?

Oh, his name was Edward Carter, Junior. He had the same name as his father, my father.

What branch of the service did he go into?

He went into the Army. Yeah. And he was injured, he got a Purple Heart. And he will never talk about the war. It's a lot of trauma, you know, of things that went on, and they don't want to remember, so.... Some people can remember it without having any difficulties, and there's some that can't. So he is one of the one's that...he was honorably discharged also. He was [tape skipping]...war, well, he went before my husband was in. He was in the service before. So....

So he went kind of early when the war first started?

Yeah, he was in there a long time before.... See, he wasn't married and he was single. There were taking the single men first.

Mmm-hmm.

And uh...then...but these, the ones with children, they didn't take 'em, you know, like they're taking them now, you know, unless they really need to.

Yeah, and that was good.

Yeah, it was good, I think it was wise to do that. Because it doesn't leave the children without parents.

Right.

[inaudible]...if the mother and father both goes. If you lose both parents, [inaudible]..forbid that happens, but it does happen sometimes. But...he survived it.

[inaudible]...things out of my mind, because the [inaudible]...and things that happened during the war uh...are unpleasant to think about.

Did your brother, he...did he...he dealt with a lot of segregation?

Oh, yeah, he...he...he said, well, I could tell you some things, but some things I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't tell you. He said you just don't know. They dealt with things that we don't know.

Well, I was going to do an oral history interview with him for this class project, but he told me that it was just too painful to think about all the things that they went through.

Oh, yes, they did, they went through things. But I wish they would, they need to do a documentary on, on the black soldiers. It was really something what they went through with. Now, the treatment that we got when we were in Wilmington, I'm sure there was racism. But we worked with, I worked with Polish, the Caucasians, uhm...blacks, all races of people were working, you know. They just were working. They were trying

to get the war over, you know, do everything they could. But I was really surprised, you know, that they were so accepting.

Right. So what did you all feel about the president at that time, Franklin Roosevelt?

Well, I think he was a good president, I really do. I think he was a good president. I wasn't too much into politics or anything. But he was good and had a brilliant wife, Eleanor, very smart. And she had a heart. She was thinking about people that uhm, to read her history is really amazing. I mean, she was fighting for the health of people and things like that. And I was upset when they didn't let, when the Jews weren't allowed to [inaudible]. But there was quite a few of them in Baltimore where they finally did land into the harbor. But I, it looked like it took forever for them to land. So there's always a lot of unhappiness in war.

END OF SIDE 1 – BEGIN SIDE 2 (TAPE 1)

Well, let's go back a little bit and talk about when you moved back to Charleston. You had one baby, one on the way, you got to move back into your duplex. Did you start working again?

Uh, well, I didn't start working right away, until after Kay was, I guess, I had weaned her.

How old was she?

I always nurse my babies, both babies, I have nursed, was nursing both babies, breast milk. So uh, I waited until I weaned her, and started doing light housework, day work. Because of the allotment...the allotment, we didn't get too much money. I can't even remember what it was, but anyway. But I lived next door to my mother-in-law, who was very, very understanding. And so she would keep the children for me while I would.... I always got the type work that they would say, "Well, you can come in and just clean up." It wasn't by the hour, at that time for some people. But it was only, they didn't pay by the hour. They paid, I think when I first came back it was \$4 a day. And uh, not an hour, \$4 a day. I had been used to making, when I was at [inaudible]...I would draw \$220 every week. And when I came back to West Virginia, this was unbelievable. Well, due to the segregation that was still in effect, you could only, a black woman, unless you had college education, which I didn't have at that time, uh...you could get, if you were lucky, if you wanted to, run the elevator, you could get, which wasn't too many business places, you could get a job running the elevator, most-, some banks or in which we didn't have only about three banks downtown at that time. And [inaudible]...they hired women to run the elevator. These elevators had heavy doors that you had to pull in order to open. And you could, you could get jobs as a maid or you could get jobs at hotels. But I chose to do that.

You mentioned something a few minutes ago about an allotment. What was an allotment?

Well, an allotment was an amount of money the government gave you, and you received it, you got so much for each child. They still do that. You know? If you, your husband signs up and tells how many children he's got. And they give you [inaudible]...I can't remember exactly what it was now. I just know it wasn't enough, you know.

Mmm-hmm. So you got that allotment because he was in the service?

Yeah, you could get, the government does that now. Like if a soldier goes in, he's got a child, you sign up, they get the money.

Mmm-hmm.

And if you're married, the wife gets money, too. So I did that, I mean, but this was...I did it for several years, even after my husband came back. But I...but I was fortunate enough to work for doctors and uh, I got good people that were wealthy but at that time, they just wasn't paying any money. That was just [inaudible].... You know. So, but I mean, it is really unbelievable that that could be so. But defense work paid big money, you know, when you went to defense work, you made good money.

Okay. One other question, I wanted to ask you this.... How did you find out news about the war?

Oh, the news...you mean when they first began?

Well, what was...

The thing I remembered most was Pearl Harbor.

Okay.

That was devastating. I mean, that was just devastating. So many men and just the trickery that they did and how they came over and had, supposed to have been having this conference.

The Japanese?

And the Japanese were on their way to bomb us, you know, with their bombs, with the bombs at the same time, caught 'em unaware and killed so many people.

Did you know...

They were the ones that I did have a friend that was in, [inaudible] a death march to.

Mmm-hmm, that's what I was gonna ask you, if you knew anyone....

Yes. See, World War II wasn't no picnic. They did horrible things. There was, the nurse that came, that came when I was in Wilmington, they had said, had put in the paper that they

were going to bring this girl, this nurse that was coming through, that they had cut her tongue out....

Mmmh, the Japanese?!

The Japanese, yeah, prisoners. The nurses went through Hell during that war. That's, I think, [inaudible]...war. I hope nothing happens, you know. But they did, they were awful what they did to the nurses and things.

Mmmh, that's a shame. Well, in later years, when your husband went to war, did you have, did you listen to the radio then too and read newspapers? Or were there special newspapers?

Well, yes, we uh, one thing, the radio was good. We would listen to the radio and uh, the, we had a newspaper called the Afro American Digest. It's still in circulation. Now, uh, my husband, when he was a little boy, he would, he would deliver those papers and sell 'em, they would sell 'em for ten cents. But that's the way we got all the news about the African-Americans, the different types of happenings and any devastating thing that happened in the South or you know, murders or [inaudible]...or whatever we got [inaudible]...they always, we always got those types of news, you know. They kept up with everything. So that's what, we would know what was happening to our people.

Mmm-hmm. So they had a black editor?

Yeah, his family and his daughter and all of them. It's still a good paper. Still a good paper. But it's not, you know, it doesn't sell like it used to. But then that was the news. It uh, you know, it would carry all the news, it carried the news about soldiers and different happenings. It was one of our vital resources.

Mmm-hmm. I wanted to ask you, too, when you all had the food shortages—I don't know how much it affected you or not—but did you all can food?

Oh, yes. Now, that's one thing that was really a good thing, if you knew how to can. You could buy, you could buy things by the bushel. You could buy uh, green beans and peaches and different things you could.... But see, the thing about the peaches were, you canned peaches. But you couldn't get ahold of enough sugar to, to can 'em, you know, like the way you'd want to. But you canned tomatoes. And then people would buy things by the bushel. And you still could do that in some places. You know, that had the markets? (Right) But I don't can any more. But I used to can.

Well, did families get together sometimes and can large amounts of food?

Well, we [inaudible]...by me living next door to my mother-in-law, I'd always help her put up things, and she'd help me. There was, even at that time, there were very few young women that, you know, canned. You had to be taught how to can, you know, [inaudible]...and all those things. (Right) And

uh, so, she was a good teacher. And my mother, and she didn't into canning too much. She didn't go into canning. My mother-in-law did, but [inaudible]...before I learned how to do that. She loved to can. So but, you know, I mean, the food, like farmers, [inaudible]...would always come in uhm, from the country, and they would sell things from the truck. You could go out to the truck and get what you wanted, fresh greens and all those kind of things. And they were cheap. I mean, you could get beans, green beans, you could get 'em for about fifteen cents a pound then. And of course, money was scarce. Now money in Charleston, we had a lot of wealthy people here in Charleston. I'm not in Charleston now, but I'm up here in Morgantown. But when we were in Charleston, there were a lot of wealthy people there. And you had, they were good to their help, you know. And they, they had chauffeurs and maids and the maids had their own quarters and things. If you didn't have children and you really wanted to work, I don't know how much they made a week. But I mean, they had their rules and things, you know, on their quarters and things. A lot of wealthy people in Charleston and around the hill. I worked for doctors that were up on the hill. [inaudible] A nice lady; she was from Virginia. She would tell me, she would say, "Polly, some day it's not always going to be this way." She'd say, "It's not going to be the way you're going to have to" Because she knew I was an intelligent woman. And I knew that I was. And so I was determined that I was going to get my education, even though I was married and had babies. I uh, I did. I did get my education. And I saw to it that my children were all educated, me and my husband.

Well, let me ask you this. Just briefly, I'll let you talk about your education in a minute. But there's a couple more questions I want to ask you concerning the war. And one of them was, what was it like when the soldiers finally came home from the war?

Oh, I will never forget that day, the day that the war ended! The people were stopping trucks on streets, they were, they just stopped whatever they were doing. They stopped. I remember there was a truck they had watermelons on it. And I can remember this! He just left the truck and the people were just getting the watermelons, they were just, he didn't care, he didn't care what they were doing! He just said he was so happy. People were just yelling and making noises and beeping horns and everything, over on Patrick Street. I happened to be over there at my mother's at the time that they said it had ended. And I never will forget that.

Did you...so were you listening to the radio when you heard about it, or was, was it word of mouth?

No! it was just, when it ended, people were yelling and just down in the streets. I wasn't listening to the radio. They were just out in the streets yelling, "It's over, it's over, it's over!"

Yeah, yeah, but I mean, the word probably came across the radio first, then it hit the newspaper and everybody was just...it was word of mouth, to get the word around.

Yes. But that's the way I heard it. I was outside and I could hear the yelling and the carrying on. We knew it was over. It was over. I didn't hear it on the radio, but I know they must have put it on the radio.

Mmm-hmm.

We didn't have televisions. So....

Well, what year did your husband come home from the war?

Well, he came home in '46. He was honorably discharged. [skip in tape]. The war was almost over when my, when Lacey, my husband, went to the service. And he was honorably discharged in '46. So, I don't think they expected the war to end really...they were still drafting men, I guess for safety's sake. It was over, we were happy when he came home, very, very happy.

When he came home, what did he do?

Well, he, before he left, when he was in Charleston, he always did interior work, like installing [inaudible]...rods and things like that in the governor's mansion, different places like that. He was always good with his hands. And so he went to West Virginia State....

West Virginia State College?

West Virginia State, went to West Virginia State College. And [inaudible]....while he was there, he was so good at cabinet making, until they uh, he assisted the late Dr. Fred [inaudible]...in instruction of cabinet making. He could make beautiful furniture and things. And uh, then he, he loved decorating. He worked for Florence Emory, who was one of the best decorators in West Virginia. She was just an outstanding decorator and he worked for her. And he also did work for Kanawha Valley, the governor's mansion, and the personal homes of Governor Cecil Underwood. I remember when he went to Huntington and after he left the governorship, he went to Huntington [inaudible]. And he also did decorating for John D. Rockefeller. He has a check that John D. Rockefeller gave him. He kept it for a long time. He did run a copy of it. It's there somewhere in the house. And uh, he did a lot of [inaudible]...work.

You continued to do day work?

No, I didn't, I decided...I decided, even though my children weren't in school, I went to school to get my education.

Well, how many children did you have?

I had five children, I had five. One son, named Steven Lacy, and I had four girls: Cherylann, [inaudible]...and you! You were the baby. So we, you remember, we went to [inaudible—tape skipping].

Right. But before you went to Morris Harvey, you got....

Before I went to Morris Harvey, I took up training to be a licensed practical nurse. And I completed that. And I...

About how old were you when you did that?

Well, let's see. That was in '68 when I graduated from there. When I got my license, or when I got my diploma. I got my license in '69. So uh, I meant to go back to figure how old I was.

So you were probably, you were in your forties, you were forty-something.

Okay.

Okay. So, so....

You can figure that out if you want to.

Okay, so it seems like the war did have an effect on the choices that you made for your life after that, because you knew that you wanted to get your education.

I wanted to get my education and I always loved helping people. And that was the [inaudible], you know, nursing at that time was opened up for black women. And uh, so I went into that. And after I completed that, I was chosen by Bruce Frazier to train as a registered [inaudible]... Thomas Memorial Hospital as a [inaudible]. And so I completed that training and I worked there for two years. Then that's when I decided to go

and get my, some hours in registered nurses training. So I took a year of that and then I went [inaudible], College and took sociology and got a bachelor of arts and graduated cum laude. And I took an internship as a social worker at Handicapped Children's Services [inaudible]. After I got that, I uh, oh, I went to work then for Multicap Agency as a health nurse in a four-county area: Clay, Putnam, Boone and Kanawha Counties. Which I dearly loved. And I had opportunities when I moved to Baltimore, Maryland. Wait...I did get my West Virginia Board of Social Work license, too. And then when I went to Baltimore, Maryland, I had the privilege to work at the Kennedy-Kruger Institute, the largest handicap center in the United States or more. It may be one of the largest in the world. I know its one of the best. I was a supervisor there on a SIB Unit, which was Serious Injury Behavior unit, where the children were that had psychological problems, and different ailments that they did not understand....psychologists, all types of medical professions. I had a chance [inaudible]. And I also did some private duty. Where I got to work with some of the doctors, where I had worked in their homes. So that was joyful moments.

Mmm-hmm, working side by side.

[inaudible]....and it was really.... And I didn't stop until I educated my children. All of you all had good educations. And uh, so, the war.... Now when I went to Morris Harvey, that was [inaudible]...war. That was [tape skipping] ...quite a few years. But it was good.

Yes, yes. So it looks like you've come a long way.

I have. I have come a long way. And I...I'll say that I wouldn't take anything for the experience. And some was good, and so I remember the good. And I, it took me some time to bring all this back. But it was worth bringing back. I enjoyed it, thinking about it. Because I had really put some of it, you know, completely aside because I wasn't doing it any more. The headstart program [inaudible]...handicapped children in there. [inaudible]...county. And uh, I don't want to forget to mention a James Michael, who was born, my first grandson, with Cerebral Palsy. And uh, so that helped in determining [inaudible]...to become a teacher for special children. So it has been a rewarding experience.

So when you were coming up and through the war, a lot of people were used to helping people, and you just wanted to continue on with that and get your education.

Yeah, yeah. The one thing about it, there were people that would come through the community at times and everything. And uh, still you would never turn them away. It was such a different time. People were just different. You could trust people. You wasn't afraid to open your door or anything like that..... They were [tape skipped]

You fed people.

Yes! Yes, if they were hungry or whatever. If they would knock on your door if they were traveling or whatever. But that was

just the community. And we had, even in the west side, there were, we had small stores, like [inaudible] has a store down on Second Avenue. We just were neighbors. It was just neighborly. I wouldn't take anything for those days.

Did you have any problems getting meat or eggs or things like that? I know you mentioned about the canned vegetables.]

Well, I'll tell you. They were uh, meat or beef, for some reason beef was hard to get. I never did understand that. But they were getting it from New Zealand. And some people wouldn't eat it. But uh....

That was during the war time?

Yes. It was during the war time. And uh, they wouldn't eat it, they...they wouldn't eat it. But it was, it was all right because we had had some of it. But it was just, you needed to know how to cook it. But uh, the meat and things...I can't remember, you know. We weren't too much of meat eaters anyway. We always ate chickens—people raised their own chickens. And the people, like I said, would come from the country, farmers, you know. We were living near coal fields where people would come in from about twenty miles away or something like that. All the counties, you know, people were.... They were going to make a living regardless.

Right.

People...you know. And people helped one another. It wasn't like...well, they help now. But it was different. It was just more of a community spirit.

How would you summarize your fondest memories of the war?

My fondest memories were traveling to a new state, where there were so many opportunities, which allowed me to learn new skills, but [inaudible].... One of the thrilling and most exciting moments I remember was when my late husband took me to see the beautiful battleship being launched at the Delaware River, that he had a part in helping to build. I wish he could have been here with us during this interview, because he could have given some insight into what it was like being a Negro sailor during World War II.

I wish he could have been here with us too. But I want to thank you for sharing your memories with us.

This has really been a pleasure for me. And also, an honor to share my memories, to help educate others on what life was really like on the home-front during World War II. And I think this is a great project. I am elated that this information will be used by the Oral History Program at Marshall.

That concludes my oral history interview with Pauline Marie Clark Hairston on the Home Front.

END OF INTERVIEW

RELEASE FORM

Deed of Gift to the Public Domain

Acc # 668

I, Pauline Clark Winston do hereby give to the Oral History of Appalachia Program of Marshall University, the tape recordings and transcripts of my interview(s) on March 8, 2003.

I authorize the Oral History of Appalachia Program of Marshall University to use the tapes and transcripts in such a manner as may best serve the educational and historical objectives of their Oral History Program.

In making this gift, I voluntarily convey ownership of the tapes and transcripts to the public domain.

Tracie A. Gilliam
(Agent of the Oral History Program)

Pauline C. Winston
(Donor)

March 8, 2003
(Date)

[This interview sounds like it was a telephone interview, hence, the reason for sections of inaudible conversation.]

My name is Vickie Gillium and this is March 8th, 2003. I am in Charleston, West Virginia, conducting an oral history interview with my mother, Pauline Hairston, who is a wife and mother on the home front during World War II.

Tell me your name, where you're from, and a little bit about your family.

My name is Pauline Marie Clark Hairston. I'm a negro woman who was born in 1923, [inaudible]...West Virginia, Putnam County. A small mining camp. My parents were Make Edward Patron Clark, Sr. My mother the late Madge Stevens Clark. I was an infant when we moved to Charleston, West Virginia. I am the second oldest child of ten children. I was educated in Kanawha County schools. The grade schools, which was named Dunbar. Moore Junior High School, Garnett High School.

Okay. Tell me a little bit about your husband. What was his name, where was he from, and also, a little bit about his family.

My husband's name was Lacey James Hairston. And he was born in 1920 in McDowell County. And that also was a small mining camp. His parents were the late Thaddeus Mitchell Hairston, and his mother was the late Sally Ann Dodson Hairston. And they moved to Charleston, West Virginia, in

1923, also, when he was just a young child. They also, he was...he was the second youngest of six children. And he attended Kanawha County school system also, the same schools, that I attended. And he was a graduate of Garnett High School.

And so, were you childhood friends?

Uh...we were childhood friends, but not...at a distance really. I would see him coming and going and things like that. He was two years older than I was. And I lived on Seventh Avenue at the time and he was living on Third Avenue when we were children. So our paths crossed as we got older. We'd be closer friends then.

Okay. Well, when did you get married?

Well, we were married in 1941. And uh, we're happily married. And our first child was born, Carolyn Fay, was born in 1942.

Where did you live?

We lived on Third Avenue and his father had built a duplex for his two sons. They were close together in uh, in age. And we both were married around about the same time. And I lived on one side of the duplex and his brother and his wife lived on the other side. And we, each of us had one child a piece. And it was in a nice community, Third Avenue. Our teachers that taught us in school lived in the same areas and there were doctors that I can remember that also had homes in the same

areas. It was a quiet neighborhood. And there was a couple of churches there, a small grocery store, [inaudible]...at the time, when we were growing up. But when we were married, then the community had began to [inaudible].

During that time, the war had already started. So uh, I know you had to deal with some rationing. What can you tell me about how rationing was enforced and some of the issues you all had to go through?

Well, the rationing were...were like, they would give you stamps or uhm...for gas and cars. But we didn't have a car at that time. So and you would get uh, certain...I guess you could call it cards for certain types.... We were short on sugar and whenever we would hear about sugar, we would all go racing to the store wherever it was to get sugar. And coffee was scarce. It was good, the prices had gone up and they had put a lot of chickory in it at times. Which didn't have a very good taste to it. At least I didn't care anything about it. So, I just didn't drink coffee during that time.

What about the clothing shortage?

Well, there were a few rations you had to have [inaudible].... The clothing, I wasn't too bothered about the clothing. I always made clothes—I was a seamstress—I could make my own clothes. And clothes for Carolyn. Pajamas and things like that. So the clothes didn't, the rationing of clothes didn't bother me, as long as I could get material to make things.

Well, what lines did you stand in when you did go through the rationing part of it? What else was rationed, besides some of the food?

Well, the rationing, some of the rationing that I experienced was after we had moved from the state to Delaware. Like standing in line for silks, for hose. Or cigarettes. I didn't smoke, but we was standing in long lines for our friends, and we would exchange stockings or whatever we had at our, so they could get, they would give me stockings and I'd let them have the cigarettes that I to stand in line for. That's the way-, because I didn't smoke, I didn't need the cigarettes. But I did need the hose.

Okay, what about the gas rationing? You mentioned something about that. Seems like that was more enforced.

Well, that was uh...that wasn't enforced. But we didn't have a car when we were, you know, in West Virginia, or in Delaware. So that didn't bother us that much.

But the people....

You had to, in order to get your, in order to get your gas, your rationing, your gas stamps, you had to have a car. They didn't just give those away. You had to prove that you needed those—they didn't just send you those. Not to my knowledge, they didn't.

Okay.

Of course, I wouldn't go so far as to say they definitely, definitely didn't, because we didn't own cars at the time. We rode a bus, which was pretty convenient, you know, wherever we wanted to go. That was, that wasn't too bad. We knew that we had to make a sacrifice for things during the war, so we just accepted it.

Okay. Well, you said you all went to Delaware. What made you move to Delaware?

Well, his oldest brother had moved to Wilmington, and he notified us that they were needing men there to work in the defense plant. Because they, at that time, they were taking so many young men and soldiers were drafted and sent off to war-, you know, during World War II. So they began taking them in large numbers and the shortage of manpower, they were trying to get help. So if you had a child at the time, they took the men first, that didn't have children. And then as it grew, the war grew worse, they began, toward the end, to draft the father's with children. So we went there seeking employment. Of which the pay was much better. And it was an opportunity to get into defense work and to help do something. It made you feel like you were doing your part for the country. My husband, after we moved there, he, at the Dravo Shipyard defense plant, where they made naval vessels for World War II. And he was a machinist, they trained him to be a machinist, and an electrician's helper. He [inaudible]...with his hands. They would, they had to go to classes and things to learn. Math classes was one of the major

things. I remember him saying that he [inaudible...tape skipping].... They needed machinists, they needed welders, they needed laborers, they needed men of all, they had all types of work during the war.

What kind of job did you get when you went to Delaware?

Well, when I went to Delaware, I decided that I wanted to work, so I only had the one child. And so I found a good babysitter for Carolyn. And I went to the uh, Delaware Mill, but it was really a rayon company where rayon was made. And I was hired there [inaudible],.... The negro women were hired to be the [inaudible]...type of unit. The work was very tedious and required rhythm and skill to [inaudible]... the rayon after it was made, [inaudible]...weighed about five pounds. And in order to get the uh...[inaudible-tape skipping]...you had to be tested. Whether you had strength enough in your right hand to take the roll of rayon that had been made in a ceramic bowl out without disturbing the silk. There was a way you could put your hand down inside of the rayon and you would have to [inaudible].... And you could not let not one string of the rayon be unraveled or you would destroy the spool, they couldn't use it. So you had to be skilled like that. If you could prove that you could do that, then they would train you to be a spinner. Which was fascinating. I really enjoyed that. It was a very dangerous job, though, because of the [inaudible]...we had to use in order to make the rayon. But, and you had to wear goggles, and you had to have gloves up to the elbow. And you had to have rubber [inaudible]...sturdy shoes and you had to wear long-

sleeved clothes. Because if any of the [inaudible]...would hit your arm or any part of your body, whenever you would try to get it off your skin, it would take the skin and all off! If it just stayed on there just a matter of minutes...it'd leave bad places on your body. And a lot of the girls would get sore eye from it. So they couldn't continue to work there. I didn't have sore eyes but one time. So I stayed there and I worked there for one year. But one thing that always troubled me was that the money, silver. If you took nickels to dimes to quarters, in the plant, they would turn very black. You couldn't hardly tell what type of money that it was, what it was, quarter, nickel, whatever. The pennies were very black. Well that troubled me because I wondered, you know, what that would do to the lungs or whatever. The fumes were very, you couldn't really smell them that bad. But I guess they were...they had to be in the atmosphere. The unit was to itself. The method of making it was very fascinating. I can't explain it exactly...[inaudible]...acid bath and then if the wheel that you put the strands on as they're going through the acid, it would be going on a wheel that was going very, very fast. And then you would use a dipper of the acid to pour down into a funnel that was constantly moving up and down very, very fast. And it would go for one hour and a half. And you had to-, they had to empty...each girl had a section that had ten spools, [inaudible]...that you had to keep going at all times. And if these, if these rayon would break, you had to lace it back into the funnel again. But it wasn't...it wasn't a difficult thing. You just had to use skill [inaudible]...careful with the acid and the [inaudible].... So I stayed there for a year. And then as the work began, as they began to lose more men and they began

to put more labor on, on...on us ladies, so I uh, resigned from the job.

And then what type of work did you do after that?

Well, after leaving, after they had the large carts with the [inaudible]...and it was about eight rows of the rayon on each tray, that was a lot of poundage to push from one unit to the other. And I really hated to leave, because I really loved that job. But I went to, immediately, [inaudible]...Airplane Factory. And that's when I became a riveter, riveting airplane doors. That was interesting, but we had to learn blueprinting before we did that, because you had to do a lot of math and things like that. But the noise, I stayed there for about nine months. I couldn't take that noise, that riveting noise. I did the airplane doors. But the noise, when you would get to riveting, it was very hard on the ear drums. So uh....

So you didn't have any ear protection?

No, you didn't have ear protection. We had severalI didn't notice any [inaudible].... But we had guards at the airplane [inaudible].... The one guard that we had, we would laugh about it sometimes, because he was German, and they were fighting Germans, and we were a little nervous. But he was nice. But it was just the idea that he was...the Germans kind of troubled us. [inaudible]...the way this war was going now, certain things trouble your mind. But uh, it was interesting. But the noise was bad. The noise was bad. So many riveters making all that racquet but it had to be done. So.... And, but

the reason I left that job was because my husband had gotten his orders to report for duty in the Navy. So...that automatically cut me out of a job. That was one of the reasons I left that job.

Well, where was he stationed?

Go ahead.

Where was he stationed?

I can't understand you.

Where was he stationed when he was sent to the Navy?

Oh, stationed in California. And the uh, his brother was a [inaudible]...and he was stationed in another part of California. But they were both in California.

What was your relationship like with your husband while he was gone to war? Did you write letters?

Oh, yes, I wrote letters to him every day. I was very lonely. Even with the baby. And I was expecting another one then. But I missed him so much, because he used to take care of everything, like the bills and other type things. And I would send him letters and he would always answer 'em back. He would answer [inaudible]...because he had not received a letter from me, the mail was slow. And sometimes they would, he would get four or five letters at one time. They, the mail

wasn't, you know, they didn't get it the week you would have liked for them to have gotten their mail. But he would read every one of them. He missed being home, too, but... He enjoyed being in the service.

Well, how did you keep up the morale while he was gone?

How did...I don't understand.

How did you keep up your morale while he was gone?

Well, now, while he was gone, I wasn't the only mother there that their husband had left to go to service. We, our community was very, very close. We, the girls, all of us had gone to school together and people had moved away. They were just uh, close friends. We looked out for each other's children and things like that. That was after see, we moved back to Charleston in '44. But he was called to the service while we were in Wilmington. And uh, but the loneliness came after we moved back.

Right. So when he got his orders you moved back to Charleston...

Mmm-hmm.

...and then he left for war.

Yeah.

Okay. So you were back at home in Charleston where you were familiar with the people and your surroundings and had family for support?

Yes. That's what he wanted. He was...he was a wise person. He, we rented our duplex out to an elderly lady while we were gone. Because I think...he probably felt that he would be there for a time, and he wouldn't want to leave me there, you know. Even though his brother was there, you know, he didn't know how long he was going to be gone and things, so.... But we did come back to West Virginia. I had a place to go to—I stayed with his mother until the house was available, so.... It was available real soon. And uh, so that's...I think about that sometime now, that was wisdom to just do that.

Yes, it was. Well, now, did you have any other relatives in the war?

Yes, I had a brother that was in the war two years younger-, or he had younger than I was. But he wanted to go so bad, he just, they put his age up and signed, his dad signed the papers for him to go. He was almost seventeen.

Mmm-hmm. What was his name?

What did you say?

What was his name?

Oh, his name was Edward Carter, Junior. He had the same name as his father, my father.

What branch of the service did he go into?

He went into the Army. Yeah. And he was injured, he got a Purple Heart. And he will never talk about the war. It's a lot of trauma, you know, of things that went on, and they don't want to remember, so.... Some people can remember it without having any difficulties, and there's some that can't. So he is one of the one's that...he was honorably discharged also. He was [tape skipping]...war, well, he went before my husband was in. He was in the service before. So....

So he went kind of early when the war first started?

Yeah, he was in there a long time before.... See, he wasn't married and he was single. There were taking the single men first.

Mmm-hmm.

And uh...then...but these, the ones with children, they didn't take 'em, you know, like they're taking them now, you know, unless they really need to.

Yeah, and that was good.

Yeah, it was good, I think it was wise to do that. Because it doesn't leave the children without parents.

Right.

[inaudible]...if the mother and father both goes. If you lose both parents, [inaudible]..forbid that happens, but it does happen sometimes. But...he survived it.

[inaudible]...things out of my mind, because the [inaudible]...and things that happened during the war uh...are unpleasant to think about.

Did your brother, he...did he...he dealt with a lot of segregation?

Oh, yeah, he...he...he said, well, I could tell you some things, but some things I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't tell you. He said you just don't know. They dealt with things that we don't know.

Well, I was going to do an oral history interview with him for this class project, but he told me that it was just too painful to think about all the things that they went through.

Oh, yes, they did, they went through things. But I wish they would, they need to do a documentary on, on the black soldiers. It was really something what they went through with. Now, the treatment that we got when we were in Wilmington, I'm sure there was racism. But we worked with, I worked with Polish, the Caucasians, uhm...blacks, all races of people were working, you know. They just were working. They were trying

to get the war over, you know, do everything they could. But I was really surprised, you know, that they were so accepting.

Right. So what did you all feel about the president at that time, Franklin Roosevelt?

Well, I think he was a good president, I really do. I think he was a good president. I wasn't too much into politics or anything. But he was good and had a brilliant wife, Eleanor, very smart. And she had a heart. She was thinking about people that uhm, to read her history is really amazing. I mean, she was fighting for the health of people and things like that. And I was upset when they didn't let, when the Jews weren't allowed to [inaudible]. But there was quite a few of them in Baltimore where they finally did land into the harbor. But I, it looked like it took forever for them to land. So there's always a lot of unhappiness in war.

END OF SIDE 1 – BEGIN SIDE 2 (TAPE 1)

Well, let's go back a little bit and talk about when you moved back to Charleston. You had one baby, one on the way, you got to move back into your duplex. Did you start working again?

Uh, well, I didn't start working right away, until after Kay was, I guess, I had weaned her.

How old was she?

I always nurse my babies, both babies, I have nursed, was nursing both babies, breast milk. So uh, I waited until I weaned her, and started doing light housework, day work. Because of the allotment...the allotment, we didn't get too much money. I can't even remember what it was, but anyway. But I lived next door to my mother-in-law, who was very, very understanding. And so she would keep the children for me while I would.... I always got the type work that they would say, "Well, you can come in and just clean up." It wasn't by the hour, at that time for some people. But it was only, they didn't pay by the hour. They paid, I think when I first came back it was \$4 a day. And uh, not an hour, \$4 a day. I had been used to making, when I was at [inaudible]...I would draw \$220 every week. And when I came back to West Virginia, this was unbelievable. Well, due to the segregation that was still in effect, you could only, a black woman, unless you had college education, which I didn't have at that time, uh...you could get, if you were lucky, if you wanted to, run the elevator, you could get, which wasn't too many business places, you could get a job running the elevator, most-, some banks or in which we didn't have only about three banks downtown at that time. And [inaudible]...they hired women to run the elevator. These elevators had heavy doors that you had to pull in order to open. And you could, you could get jobs as a maid or you could get jobs at hotels. But I chose to do that.

You mentioned something a few minutes ago about an allotment. What was an allotment?

Well, an allotment was an amount of money the government gave you, and you received it, you got so much for each child. They still do that. You know? If you, your husband signs up and tells how many children he's got. And they give you [inaudible]...I can't remember exactly what it was now. I just know it wasn't enough, you know.

Mmm-hmm. So you got that allotment because he was in the service?

Yeah, you could get, the government does that now. Like if a soldier goes in, he's got a child, you sign up, they get the money.

Mmm-hmm.

And if you're married, the wife gets money, too. So I did that, I mean, but this was...I did it for several years, even after my husband came back. But I...but I was fortunate enough to work for doctors and uh, I got good people that were wealthy but at that time, they just wasn't paying any money. That was just [inaudible].... You know. So, but I mean, it is really unbelievable that that could be so. But defense work paid big money, you know, when you went to defense work, you made good money.

Okay. One other question, I wanted to ask you this.... How did you find out news about the war?

Oh, the news...you mean when they first began?

Well, what was...

The thing I remembered most was Pearl Harbor.

Okay.

That was devastating. I mean, that was just devastating. So many men and just the trickery that they did and how they came over and had, supposed to have been having this conference.

The Japanese?

And the Japanese were on their way to bomb us, you know, with their bombs, with the bombs at the same time, caught 'em unaware and killed so many people.

Did you know...

They were the ones that I did have a friend that was in, [inaudible] a death march to.

Mmm-hmm, that's what I was gonna ask you, if you knew anyone....

Yes. See, World War II wasn't no picnic. They did horrible things. There was, the nurse that came, that came when I was in Wilmington, they had said, had put in the paper that they

were going to bring this girl, this nurse that was coming through, that they had cut her tongue out....

Mmmh, the Japanese?!

The Japanese, yeah, prisoners. The nurses went through Hell during that war. That's, I think, [inaudible]...war. I hope nothing happens, you know. But they did, they were awful what they did to the nurses and things.

Mmmh, that's a shame. Well, in later years, when your husband went to war, did you have, did you listen to the radio then too and read newspapers? Or were there special newspapers?

Well, yes, we uh, one thing, the radio was good. We would listen to the radio and uh, the, we had a newspaper called the Afro American Digest. It's still in circulation. Now, uh, my husband, when he was a little boy, he would, he would deliver those papers and sell 'em, they would sell 'em for ten cents. But that's the way we got all the news about the African-Americans, the different types of happenings and any devastating thing that happened in the South or you know, murders or [inaudible]...or whatever we got [inaudible]...they always, we always got those types of news, you know. They kept up with everything. So that's what, we would know what was happening to our people.

Mmm-hmm. So they had a black editor?

Yeah, his family and his daughter and all of them. It's still a good paper. Still a good paper. But it's not, you know, it doesn't sell like it used to. But then that was the news. It uh, you know, it would carry all the news, it carried the news about soldiers and different happenings. It was one of our vital resources.

Mmm-hmm. I wanted to ask you, too, when you all had the food shortages—I don't know how much it affected you or not—but did you all can food?

Oh, yes. Now, that's one thing that was really a good thing, if you knew how to can. You could buy, you could buy things by the bushel. You could buy uh, green beans and peaches and different things you could.... But see, the thing about the peaches were, you canned peaches. But you couldn't get ahold of enough sugar to, to can 'em, you know, like the way you'd want to. But you canned tomatoes. And then people would buy things by the bushel. And you still could do that in some places. You know, that had the markets? (Right) But I don't can any more. But I used to can.

Well, did families get together sometimes and can large amounts of food?

Well, we [inaudible]...by me living next door to my mother-in-law, I'd always help her put up things, and she'd help me. There was, even at that time, there were very few young women that, you know, canned. You had to be taught how to can, you know, [inaudible]...and all those things. (Right) And

uh, so, she was a good teacher. And my mother, and she didn't into canning too much. She didn't go into canning. My mother-in-law did, but [inaudible]...before I learned how to do that. She loved to can. So but, you know, I mean, the food, like farmers, [inaudible]...would always come in uhm, from the country, and they would sell things from the truck. You could go out to the truck and get what you wanted, fresh greens and all those kind of things. And they were cheap. I mean, you could get beans, green beans, you could get 'em for about fifteen cents a pound then. And of course, money was scarce. Now money in Charleston, we had a lot of wealthy people here in Charleston. I'm not in Charleston now, but I'm up here in Morgantown. But when we were in Charleston, there were a lot of wealthy people there. And you had, they were good to their help, you know. And they, they had chauffeurs and maids and the maids had their own quarters and things. If you didn't have children and you really wanted to work, I don't know how much they made a week. But I mean, they had their rules and things, you know, on their quarters and things. A lot of wealthy people in Charleston and around the hill. I worked for doctors that were up on the hill. [inaudible] A nice lady; she was from Virginia. She would tell me, she would say, "Polly, some day it's not always going to be this way." She'd say, "It's not going to be the way you're going to have to" Because she knew I was an intelligent woman. And I knew that I was. And so I was determined that I was going to get my education, even though I was married and had babies. I uh, I did. I did get my education. And I saw to it that my children were all educated, me and my husband.

Well, let me ask you this. Just briefly, I'll let you talk about your education in a minute. But there's a couple more questions I want to ask you concerning the war. And one of them was, what was it like when the soldiers finally came home from the war?

Oh, I will never forget that day, the day that the war ended! The people were stopping trucks on streets, they were, they just stopped whatever they were doing. They stopped. I remember there was a truck they had watermelons on it. And I can remember this! He just left the truck and the people were just getting the watermelons, they were just, he didn't care, he didn't care what they were doing! He just said he was so happy. People were just yelling and making noises and beeping horns and everything, over on Patrick Street. I happened to be over there at my mother's at the time that they said it had ended. And I never will forget that.

Did you...so were you listening to the radio when you heard about it, or was, was it word of mouth?

No! it was just, when it ended, people were yelling and just down in the streets. I wasn't listening to the radio. They were just out in the streets yelling, "It's over, it's over, it's over!"

Yeah, yeah, but I mean, the word probably came across the radio first, then it hit the newspaper and everybody was just...it was word of mouth, to get the word around.

Yes. But that's the way I heard it. I was outside and I could hear the yelling and the carrying on. We knew it was over. It was over. I didn't hear it on the radio, but I know they must have put it on the radio.

Mmm-hmm.

We didn't have televisions. So....

Well, what year did your husband come home from the war?

Well, he came home in '46. He was honorably discharged. [skip in tape]. The war was almost over when my, when Lacey, my husband, went to the service. And he was honorably discharged in '46. So, I don't think they expected the war to end really...they were still drafting men, I guess for safety's sake. It was over, we were happy when he came home, very, very happy.

When he came home, what did he do?

Well, he, before he left, when he was in Charleston, he always did interior work, like installing [inaudible]...rods and things like that in the governor's mansion, different places like that. He was always good with his hands. And so he went to West Virginia State....

West Virginia State College?

West Virginia State, went to West Virginia State College. And [inaudible]...while he was there, he was so good at cabinet making, until they uh, he assisted the late Dr. Fred [inaudible]...in instruction of cabinet making. He could make beautiful furniture and things. And uh, then he, he loved decorating. He worked for Florence Emory, who was one of the best decorators in West Virginia. She was just an outstanding decorator and he worked for her. And he also did work for Kanawha Valley, the governor's mansion, and the personal homes of Governor Cecil Underwood. I remember when he went to Huntington and after he left the governorship, he went to Huntington [inaudible]. And he also did decorating for John D. Rockefeller. He has a check that John D. Rockefeller gave him. He kept it for a long time. He did run a copy of it. It's there somewhere in the house. And uh, he did a lot of [inaudible]...work.

You continued to do day work?

No, I didn't, I decided...I decided, even though my children weren't in school, I went to school to get my education.

Well, how many children did you have?

I had five children, I had five. One son, named Steven Lacy, and I had four girls: Cherylan, [inaudible]...and you! You were the baby. So we, you remember, we went to [inaudible—tape skipping].

Right. But before you went to Morris Harvey, you got....

Before I went to Morris Harvey, I took up training to be a licensed practical nurse. And I completed that. And I....

About how old were you when you did that?

Well, let's see. That was in '68 when I graduated from there. When I got my license, or when I got my diploma. I got my license in '69. So uh, I meant to go back to figure how old I was.

So you were probably, you were in your forties, you were forty-something.

Okay.

Okay. So, so....

You can figure that out if you want to.

Okay, so it seems like the war did have an effect on the choices that you made for your life after that, because you knew that you wanted to get your education.

I wanted to get my education and I always loved helping people. And that was the [inaudible], you know, nursing at that time was opened up for black women. And uh, so I went into that. And after I completed that, I was chosen by Bruce Frazier to train as a registered [inaudible]... Thomas Memorial Hospital as a [inaudible]. And so I completed that training and I worked there for two years. Then that's when I decided to go

and get my, some hours in registered nurses training. So I took a year of that and then I went [inaudible], College and took sociology and got a bachelor of arts and graduated cum laude. And I took an internship as a social worker at Handicapped Children's Services [inaudible]. After I got that, I uh, oh, I went to work then for Multicap Agency as a health nurse in a four-county area: Clay, Putnam, Boone and Kanawha Counties. Which I dearly loved. And I had opportunities when I moved to Baltimore, Maryland. Wait...I did get my West Virginia Board of Social Work license, too. And then when I went to Baltimore, Maryland, I had the privilege to work at the Kennedy-Kruger Institute, the largest handicap center in the United States or more. It may be one of the largest in the world. I know its one of the best. I was a supervisor there on a SIB Unit, which was Serious Injury Behavior unit, where the children were that had psychological problems, and different ailments that they did not understand....psychologists, all types of medical professions. I had a chance [inaudible]. And I also did some private duty. Where I got to work with some of the doctors, where I had worked in their homes. So that was joyful moments.

Mmm-hmm, working side by side.

[inaudible]....and it was really.... And I didn't stop until I educated my children. All of you all had good educations. And uh, so, the war.... Now when I went to Morris Harvey, that was [inaudible]...war. That was [tape skipping] ...quite a few years. But it was good.

Yes, yes. So it looks like you've come a long way.

I have. I have come a long way. And I...I'll say that I wouldn't take anything for the experience. And some was good, and so I remember the good. And I, it took me some time to bring all this back. But it was worth bringing back. I enjoyed it, thinking about it. Because I had really put some of it, you know, completely aside because I wasn't doing it any more. The headstart program [inaudible]...handicapped children in there. [inaudible]...county. And uh, I don't want to forget to mention a James Michael, who was born, my first grandson, with Cerebral Palsy. And uh, so that helped in determining [inaudible]...to become a teacher for special children. So it has been a rewarding experience.

So when you were coming up and through the war, a lot of people were used to helping people, and you just wanted to continue on with that and get your education.

Yeah, yeah. The one thing about it, there were people that would come through the community at times and everything. And uh, still you would never turn them away. It was such a different time. People were just different. You could trust people. You wasn't afraid to open your door or anything like that..... They were [tape skipped]

You fed people.

Yes! Yes, if they were hungry or whatever. If they would knock on your door if they were traveling or whatever. But that was

just the community. And we had, even in the west side, there were, we had small stores, like [inaudible] has a store down on Second Avenue. We just were neighbors. It was just neighborly. I wouldn't take anything for those days.

Did you have any problems getting meat or eggs or things like that? I know you mentioned about the canned vegetables.]

Well, I'll tell you. They were uh, meat or beef, for some reason beef was hard to get. I never did understand that. But they were getting it from New Zealand. And some people wouldn't eat it. But uh....

That was during the war time?

Yes. It was during the war time. And uh, they wouldn't eat it, they...they wouldn't eat it. But it was, it was all right because we had had some of it. But it was just, you needed to know how to cook it. But uh, the meat and things...I can't remember, you know. We weren't too much of meat eaters anyway. We always ate chickens—people raised their own chickens. And the people, like I said, would come from the country, farmers, you know. We were living near coal fields where people would come in from about twenty miles away or something like that. All the counties, you know, people were.... They were going to make a living regardless.

Right.

People...you know. And people helped one another. It wasn't like...well, they help now. But it was different. It was just more of a community spirit.

How would you summarize your fondest memories of the war?

My fondest memories were traveling to a new state, where there were so many opportunities, which allowed me to learn new skills, but [inaudible].... One of the thrilling and most exciting moments I remember was when my late husband took me to see the beautiful battleship being launched at the Delaware River, that he had a part in helping to build. I wish he could have been here with us during this interview, because he could have given some insight into what it was like being a Negro sailor during World War II.

I wish he could have been here with us too. But I want to thank you for sharing your memories with us.

This has really been a pleasure for me. And also, an honor to share my memories, to help educate others on what life was really like on the home-front during World War II. And I think this is a great project. I am elated that this information will be used by the Oral History Program at Marshall.

That concludes my oral history interview with Pauline Marie Clark Hairston on the Home Front.

END OF INTERVIEW