

Lucille Ford BNY 071211

Brooklyn Navy Yard Oral History Collection

Interview conducted on December 11, 2007 at Ms. Ford's home in Hempstead, NY

by Sady Sullivan and Jennifer Egan

Verbatim Transcript

[00:00:00]

JENNY: You know, this -- what you say, it's not like this entire interview is going to appear anywhere. In other words, we can be freewheeling and it's all -- it's just about kind of getting to that material. We shouldn't feel like every word is -- you know, every word is urgent and has to be perfect.

LUCILLE: You're trying me -- trying to tell me calm down (inaudible).

JENNY: Yeah, and also telling myself, because I know my words aren't all going to be perfect, that's for sure. And this is, um, it's kind of exciting, because I've been doing these on my own, um, because I am a novelist and I'm interested in women who worked at the Navy Yard because I'm doing research for a novel, and I ended up, um, becoming friendly with Daniella, who I think has spoken to your mom. She's the --

LUCILLE: That's my daughter.

JENNY: I'm sorry, your --

LUCILLE: The girl there with the big afro, that's -- that's Pam, who I think you've spoken to her before.

JENNY: Oh, OK, and I've emailed with her. And Daniella and I become friendly. She's the archivist at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and so we decided to begin this oral history project. But now what's exciting is that the Brooklyn Navy Yard has partnered with the Brooklyn History Society, which is where Sady works, and so now we have access to a real professional, as you can see.

LUCILLE: Yeah. You're the professional, huh?

JENNY: Exactly.

Q2: Well I do -- yeah, I do the Oral History Program at the Historical Society.

JENNY: So, um, anyway --

LUCILLE: Are you -- is this your study?

Q2: Yeah -- oh, I've been working for Jenny. Um, I'm doing an internship program in New York so I've been helping her research for her novel, and --

LUCILLE: Oh, you're not exactly a stranger to this kind of thing.

JENNY: No. W-she transcribed another interview with the -- with the woman on Long Island, so she heard that and she's been doing other research on New York in the '40s.

LUCILLE: Well, I'm-I'm asking a question. I think I'd better shut up and let you (inaudible).

JENNY: No, we don't want you to shut up, but wait, let's see. OK, I'm just going to turn mine on too.

Q2: Um, and I -- I'm not sure, is this -- is there a switch for this one?

LUCILLE: Oh, you know what? Turn that first one.

Q2: Oh, this one.

LUCILLE: Which one -- whichever one it works.

Q2: Oh, yeah, I think -- think that's it. Perfect, thank you.

JENNY: Um, so let's just start -- if you would just, um, give me the spelling of your name and also your maiden name, if that was different, and, um, your address, and -- just so we have those coordinates very clearly.

LUCILLE: At that time I wasn't married. My name is Lucille Ford -- uh, Butler -- and then I married Ford.

JENNY: OK, and now you're Lucille Ford. And your address is 33 Alabama Avenue, OK. Um, and where and when were you born?

LUCILLE: I was born here, in Harlem, and uh -- I mean, New York, at Harlem. I lived -- what, do you want my address there, too?

JENNY: Sure, that would be great.

LUCILLE: OK. I was born on 7th Avenue. I don't know the number of that. I was a home baby.

JENNY: Oh.

LUCILLE: And uh, then we moved to 142nd Street at 8th and -- between 7th and 8th. Then we moved to 150th Street between 7th and McCoombs (sp?), because that street splits out, but it's not too far from 8th Avenue also.

JENNY: And can you tell just a little bit about your family background -- siblings -- what was your family configuration?

LUCILLE: Uh, I was the only girl. I was the youngest until my mother deceived me, told me she was pregnant, and maybe I'd have a little sister. And guess what it was? A boy. Another boy. I had two older brothers and one younger brother. He was ten years younger than myself.

JENNY: OK, and what did your parents do?

LUCILLE: My father worked in the post office and my mother just, um, did domestic work.

JENNY: And um, can you talk about how you came to be at the Brooklyn Navy Yard?

LUCILLE: Well, uh, hmm. I didn't think you'd ask that question. I didn't think about it. I had just graduated from [Wadley?] High School, and I was looking for a job, and I decided to -- I worked -- my girlfriend was working at a factory, and I worked there for two weeks and then we heard that, uh, the uh Navy Yard was hiring, and I decided to go there.

JENNY: What kind of factory was it?

LUCILLE: I don't know. I guess it was -- it was -- I was there such a little time, I don't remember, but it was kind of a -- I think it was clothing. I don't really quite remember, and she's not around anymore for me to ask.

JENNY: And do you remember how you heard that the Navy Yard was hiring? Was it just a word of mouth, or --

LUCILLE: It was word of mouth.

JENNY: And so what happened?

[00:05:02]

LUCILLE: I went to the Navy Yard in Brooklyn. I had never been in Brooklyn before. I got off the subway, got on a bus, and rode to High Street. I think -- is it High -- I got off at High Street subway, and I got the bus, and it took me to maybe -- I don't even remember the address of the Navy Yard.

JENNY: Well, there are many different entrances along
Flushing and the Sand -- the Sand Street.

LUCILLE: The building -- where the Building 77 was, I don't
remember what uh, what avenue it was on or anything.

JENNY: Um, but when you first applied for the job, did --
what did -- do you remember what that process consisted of?

LUCILLE: Uh, of course they wanted to know how much education
you had, and there weren't any openings. I told them I had
graduated from high school but there weren't any openings.
But they suggested that I stay with -- because they needed
messengers, and that they would -- that my -- you know, if
I waited around, I'd be there if a messenger job opened up
and they could take me immediately. So I took that for-for
about maybe a month, and uh, then I went into a clerical,
which was typing up invoices, I guess for materials. I
don't know what they were. I just typed them.

JENNY: So you obviously were -- you knew how to type.

LUCILLE: Yes, I did.

JENNY: Um, what year was this?

LUCILLE: 1940 -- early '42, I think. 1942, [in my town?]. I
don't remember the addre -- the town.

JENNY: So you say you, um, they said stick around, and so did
you work as a messenger while they --

LUCILLE: Yes, I did work as a messenger. I -- that's the job I got.

JENNY: I see, OK. And --

LUCILLE: Because it was available.

JENNY: -- and what did that job consist of?

LUCILLE: Um, you know, I really don't remember. I guess delivering packages and picking up packages --

JENNY: From building --

LUCILLE: No, just in that one building and to different offices in that -- on that floor.

JENNY: And that was also Building 77?

LUCILLE: That's -- all that's in Building 77.

JENNY: OK, OK. So when you f-right from when you first arrived at the Navy Yard, 77 was where -- the place where you were --

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: -- spending your time.

LUCILLE: I went with another friend of mine -- I can't remember her name. But anyway, she lived in the Bronx. I was living in the Bronx at that time. 892 -- can't remember the street.

JENNY: Had you left -- had you moved to the Bronx right after school?

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: OK.

LUCILLE: Because the school was in Harlem, and I uh, didn't have any uh -- I was just living in the -- I just moved to the Bronx, so I didn't know very much.

JENNY: (Inaudible.)

Q2: Oh, wow.

JENNY: Is that your yearbook?

LUCILLE: Yes.

Q2: Wow.

LUCILLE: It's 100 years old.

JENNY: June 1940.

LUCILLE: Yeah.

Q2: Nice.

JENNY: That is incredible. I don't even have my yearbooks!

LUCILLE: Why not?

JENNY: We moved, and they fell through the cracks.

LUCILLE: Oh, yeah. I guess that's what happened to that picture, but I -- I saw that picture in this house, so it's around here someplace. I haven't been able to find it.

Q2: Wow.

JENNY: That's amazing.

LUCILLE: Uh, after I -- you know, I was there in the building when the -- when the messenger job opened, so I just took it, and I was with another girl. I can't remember her

name. Maybe her name is on one of the pictures I have of her. Um, we used to go horseback riding and uh, she had a whole bunch of kids that uh, she went around with. They all lived in the Bronx -- uh, Higher Bronx. I lived in the Lower Bronx, 163rd Street.

JENNY: And had you moved there because of the factory job?
Was that --

LUCILLE: No, no, no, no, no. We had decided -- my mother said Harlem is getting bad, people are getting killed, things are happening, and I don't want you -- you kids in this environment. So we moved to the Bronx. My father -- my father left my mother when I was ten years old, so it was just my mother and my two brothers and myself.

JENNY: I see, so the whole family had moved to the Bronx --

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: -- right after, so you were still living with your family.

LUCILLE: With-without -- oh yes.

JENNY: OK.

LUCILLE: You know, in those days, you don't leave home until you're married.

[00:10:00]

JENNY: And you know what, I realize I didn't get the year of your birth.

LUCILLE: 19 -- November 22nd, 1922.

JENNY: OK. So the girl that you went to the Navy Yard with
also lived in the Bronx.

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: And -- but did you --

LUCILLE: In the higher part of the Bronx, and that's why she
was a -- she was going horseback riding all the time, and
then I got interested in horseback riding and I started
going with her group.

JENNY: Where did they run it?

LUCILLE: But we never could ride in Central Park for the simple
reason it was \$2.50, and she knew a place in New Jersey
where it was only \$1.00. And then we started moo-bowli --
not bowling, but um, horseback riding out here, in the
other town. Um, not Rockville Center. Lakeview. Yes, in
Rockville Center.

JENNY: Rockville Center?

LUCILLE: Yeah, they had a stable over there.

JENNY: And was that before you worked at the Navy Yard?

LUCILLE: No, it was while --

JENNY: Oh while, OK.

LUCILLE: -- because I -- I saw her every day. She was married
already.

JENNY: So she got a -- she got a job also.

LUCILLE: Yes, she got a job, but she was a clerk typist. She had gotten in just a little bit ahead of me, so she -- now I didn't remember all that. Yeah, she had gotten to -- you told me that would --

JENNY: See? Um, so then when you also got the clerk typist job, were you working in the same area that she was?

LUCILLE: Yes, I was. That's when we begin to meet a lot of the waves that came in, you know.

JENNY: Talk about that.

LUCILLE: Well, they were all like little bosses. Not-not -- they weren't bossy, but what I'm trying to say, they were on a different level. We were just clerk typists and they were a different level.

JENNY: And did -- did you, um, was that something that you felt because of who they were, or was it something that they -- they gave you the sense of with their --

LUCILLE: No, because they were in the Navy. They were in the Navy, they wore their uniforms. That's why I decided I liked the uniform, and I asked the, uh -- the [ensign?]. She was an ensign. Uh, I said, could I buy one? She said, sure. And I bought one, and I wore it a long time.

JENNY: So you wore a Navy -- a Naval uniform to work.

LUCILLE: No, I just wore it -- because it was a nice -- you know, it was a nice skirt and jacket.

JENNY: That's interesting.

LUCILLE: I thought I said that to someone on the phone. I thought it was you.

JENNY: It might have been Daniella, the archivist.

LUCILLE: Oh, it could have been, yes.

JENNY: Because we -- remember, we kept missing each other and we only spoke a couple of days ago. Um, and do you remember where you bought the uniform?

LUCILLE: She brought it in to me, and I paid for it.

JENNY: And you told -- you had told her your size?

LUCILLE: Yeah, yeah.

JENNY: Do you, um, what -- I'd love to hear about the physical plant of -- of your work. Do you remember what floor it was on, what the surroundings were like?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: Um, do -- did you work in an open space, or an office/

LUCILLE: In -- in an office. It was in different sections, and um, like the typists were, uh, a little bit away from the other offices, but if we had something to take into those offices, we'd just walk in there with it, you know.

JENNY: And so did you work among other typists?

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: Do you remember how many, or how it -- how it was organized?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: OK. But your friend --

LUCILLE: I do remember, uh, one of the girls that worked there was from Binghamton, New York, and I-I never really spoke to her to find -- I was nosy enough, but I didn't think that was proper, to ask her where was she living. Did she commute every day? And I -- that's impossible. So I just left it alone. And I was very, very shy, so I would just, you know, make my conversation just very minimal.

JENNY: Um, and so did you -- did you work closely with the other typists? Were you physically quite near each other?

LUCILLE: You know, I don't -- only the girl that lived in the Bronx.

JENNY: OK. Because I was thinking if you were working with someone every day, it would be so easy to say, you know, do you commute, or --

LUCILLE: Oh, well, you know, I changed hours and uh, at first I was working the daytime, and then I was coming home at 12:00 at night. Whatever -- you know, I can't remember whether it was five to 11 or just what it was.

JENNY: And how did -- how did that work? Was that --

[00:15:00]

LUCILLE: I-I-It was good, because I got on the subway and came right home, after I got -- took the bus, and the subway,

and the subway would bring me right straight to uh, Tyoga
(sp?) Drive.

JENNY: Do you remember which subway you took?

LUCILLE: It wasn't the 8th Avenue, I know.

JENNY: But something that got off at High Street.

LUCILLE: Yeah. Not -- well, High Street, yes, for-for the Navy
Yard, and then the other one -- the other, going back home,
that wasn't Tyoga Drive, no. That was uh, that's when I
moved to Jamaica. Uh, I don't even remember the stop.

JENNY: Do you know what shop number or local union you were a
part of at the yard?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: OK. Um, so you -- so your initial hours were sort of
late afternoon into the evening.

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: And then did -- you said that those changed?

LUCILLE: No, they were early hours. Like, I worked nine to
five or whatever, and then we got this -- I got the other
hours.

JENNY: Was that your choice? Do you remember how that
changed?

LUCILLE: I really think that, um, because they accepted me, I
stayed on the job until I learned it, and then I was able
to go to the other hours, because I didn't have -- they

didn't have that many instructors, and uh, I had -- I had learned the job, so they just put me on the other hours. I was cap-capable of doing the job without too much assistance.

JENNY: And do you recall what that training involved? What did you need to learn to do the job?

LUCILLE: (Inaudible) how to work with work, you know. You get papers, you type on them, and uh, accurately, and that's it. I don't know of any other -- it wasn't a difficult job.

JENNY: And do you recall, um, what sorts of things you were typing? You mentioned invoices.

LUCILLE: Invoices. That's the only thing I can remember now, that it was just invoices.

JENNY: And did you have a sense of what -- you know, what materials you were dealing with? Did you feel how your work fit into something larger?

LUCILLE: I wasn't that curious.

JENNY: How come?

LUCILLE: Well, I was -- how old was I then? I just wasn't curious.

JENNY: Early 20s, I guess.

LUCILLE: Yeah, early 20s.

JENNY: Or actually, maybe just 20.

LUCILLE: Hmm, when I graduated from high school I was 18, 17.

I-I guess -- yeah, I was 17, and I just didn't -- I didn't have that kind of curiosity. I mean, if you tell me to do this, I'll do this. And if it's right, good. And it's wrong, then tell me something else. But other than that, I think they only look for accuracy.

JENNY: Um, and were you pretty accurate?

LUCILLE: Most of the time.

JENNY: Um, do you -- how long did you end up working at the Navy Yard?

LUCILLE: Until '45. I guess it was '45 because we realized that the job was coming to a close, and that's why Rosie was saying, come on, get out of here, Lucille. They're going to throw us out if we don't get another job, so --

JENNY: And she was right. Did -- were you --

LUCILLE: But you had the opportunity if you wanted to stay with civil service to take the test, because I -- it wasn't required that I had a test at that particular time. They just needed people, and if you met certain qualifications, they took you.

JENNY: And were you -- were you tempted to do that?

LUCILLE: No, I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to take a test. I had finished with school. (Inaudible) test.

JENNY: How did you -- how did --

LUCILLE: I guess I wasn't very ambitious.

JENNY: How did you and your friend know that -- that the time -- that things would be shrinking in terms of jobs?

LUCILLE: Oh, reading the paper, finding out that uh, war was coming to an end and probably they wouldn't have a use for us, and they -- we had -- we had heard -- what was it, Building 77 will be the first to go, because all the other people who worked there, you know, that actually worked on um, ships and stuff like that, their work was more involved, and it's something that they could continue to do. But they only needed us for paperwork, and uh, that was coming to a close.

JENNY: So what -- did Building 77 have other activities going on in it that you were aware --

LUCILLE: Not that I know of, and especially since I didn't continue to work daytime and going in and night, all you did was go in at work, and that's it.

JENNY: Were there -- was the atmosphere different at night than it had been?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: Less crowded or more crowded?

LUCILLE: Less crowded. Did you see me? Lucille Butler?

Q2: Yeah, yeah.

[00:19:57]

JENNY: Oh, I want to see that, too. Um, do you remember much about the routine during the day, in terms of like breaks or schedule --

LUCILLE: No. That was really my first job, so I thought everybody worked, who worked, did it -- did it that way, you know. I didn't have any knowledge of any other type of jobs.

JENNY: Did you have -- were you aware of, um, of the history of women at the yard, or did you have a sense that it was new for women to be there?

LUCILLE: No, why would I?

JENNY: Well, I was just --

LUCILLE: First time I worked. I figured that uh, that was the work, and I'd do it, because I didn't think about other people.

JENNY: Now, in terms of -- you had a long commute to come to the Navy Yard, and what made you want to do that as opposed to the factory? Were there things that it offered that the factory didn't?

LUCILLE: No, I had always wanted to do clerical work.

JENNY: So you preferred it over the factory work.

LUCILLE: Oh yeah, over factory work.

JENNY: Do you remember the pay, whether it w-either how much it was, or how --

LUCILLE: No, the only pay I remember is when I worked at the telephone company, and that was paying \$18 a week.

JENNY: And that was the next job that you and Rose went on to.

LUCILLE: Yeah, and I think that the, uh, Navy job was every two weeks, you know, and -- I c -- I handed the check over to my mother anyway, so -- and she gave me coffee.

JENNY: How did she and your family feel about your working at the Navy Yard?

LUCILLE: We didn't give it any thought. Work was work. You needed work, and it was Depression time before that, so everybody was glad to have a job.

JENNY: Um, do you remember anything about lunchtime? Did you bring a lunch? Where did you eat --

LUCILLE: I must have br-brought a lunch, because we uh, we'd go in whatever room there was, it was maybe a recreation room or something, and we'd all eat at uh, like 7:00 at night.

JENNY: Obviously when you were on the night shift.

LUCILLE: Yeah, that's when -- and I was on the night shift most of the time. You know, I just hadn't recalled -- and I had been on that night shift -- you know, until you started questioning me.

JENNY: And so -- so the day shift, if you were going to imagine how long that training took, was that a matter of just months?

LUCILLE: Couple of weeks.

JENNY: Oh really? Wow, so that was quick. Um, so you would have a break and sort of a meal all together, at around seven?

LUCILLE: Uh, when I was on nights?

JENNY: Yeah, on the night shift.

LUCILLE: Yeah, right.

JENNY: And do you remember -- was it -- was it a time of socializing? Did people chat?

LUCILLE: Yeah, of course. But what we chatted about, I have no idea! I guess it was because the girl from Binghamton was always talking about her home and her family and stuff like that. But you know, I don't even remember her name.

JENNY: Now I want to know if she was commuting.

LUCILLE: Yeah. Maybe she had an aunt or somebody who she lived with.

JENNY: Do you remember any of the other women or men that (inaudible)?

LUCILLE: Only -- only um, Adele. That's the girl from the Bronx.

JENNY: Oh, you got her name.

LUCILLE: Yeah.

JENNY: Great. So were you -- would you say she was your friend?

LUCILLE: Yes, she was.

JENNY: So you kind of hung together?

LUCILLE: Yeah, and we uh, went to uh, as I said, we went horseback riding together a lot.

JENNY: And you did that on your days off, presumably, or --

LUCILLE: Usually on Saturday or Sunday. I don't think we worked on the weekend.

JENNY: Um, and do you remember any other -- so you remember the girl from Binghamton and your friend Adele. Any other people you remember even by just sight or anything (inaudible)?

LUCILLE: No, if anybody were to walk up to me today and say, I remember you from the Navy Yard, I wouldn't know who they were.

JENNY: Interesting. What about your supervisor?

LUCILLE: She was very nice. I -- and I don't remember her name. I tried to think it up, but I couldn't. Um, she was from the Bahamas, and she was tall, and she was very, uh -- she looked like she should be a supervisor, but she was very sweet, very nice lady.

JENNY: It's interesting. I haven't heard of many female supervisors, so I'm -- I'm interested that she was female.

LUCILLE: I wish I could remember her name, because she was such a nice person. I remember one girl who came in after, when school was -- uh, she was a supervisor, too. And her last name was Rossoff, and she was tall and she had dark hair.

JENNY: Like R-O-S-S --

[00:24:56]

LUCILLE: O-F-F. Of course we called her Ms. Rossoff because we didn't call her by her first name, you know, so I don't remember what her name was, what everybody else called her.

JENNY: Did she replace the woman from the Bahamas?

LUCILLE: No, they both worked together.

JENNY: So there must have been a fair number of employees there if there were two supervisors.

LUCILLE: Oh yeah, but you know, when I went to the telephone company, that was so lively I dropped all (inaudible).

JENNY: Um, so OK. Do you remember, have any sense of how old the supervisors were?

LUCILLE: I would say they were in their 30s, which was old at that time.

JENNY: And did you have a sense of whether they were married or had families?

LUCILLE: No, I didn't have a sense of that.

JENNY: And what about the other girls? I mean, obviously you were very young. Were the -- did you have a sense of whether some of them were at different points in their --

LUCILLE: No. I wasn't very nosy. I was nosy, but I was -- I didn't -- I didn't apply it.

JENNY: Um, what about the -- the cultural and racial mix among the people there?

LUCILLE: Well, I'll tell you it was a very nice mix of girls. I would -- there was a lot of Jewish girls. I remember one girl's last name, Golding, and uh, we used to go to the different places in uh, in Brooklyn to eat, and uh, that's usually just that -- one of the -- a couple of the people got married, so we went to their weddings.

JENNY: Do you remember where they were?

LUCILLE: I-In Brooklyn.

JENNY: Oh, in Brooklyn?

LUCILLE: I think it was in Brooklyn.

JENNY: OK. So most of them, other than yourself and Bemington and Adele were in Brooklyn. Did you have that sense?

LUCILLE: Uh, no, Adele lived in the Bronx.

JENNY: Right, but I mean --

LUCILLE: And I don't know -- Binghamton, uh, the girl from Binghamton (inaudible).

JENNY: Right, we don't know.

LUCILLE: Yeah, we don't know where she was staying. She had to be staying someplace to get to work. Oh, she didn't have to get to work till evening, so maybe she did travel, I don't know.

JENNY: So a couple -- so you went to a couple of weddings.

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: Do you remember them?

LUCILLE: One girl was, um, oh, it was a Jewish girl and an Italian girl -- oh, Francis. She was a -- she was another one of my friends, and she was very curious, and she said she had never been to Harlem, so I said, why don't you come and visit me? So she said, good. I said, uh, what kind of food do you like? She says, tell your mother to cook anything. This -- we were in the Bronx. It wasn't Harlem, it was in the Bronx. And she says, I've never tasted greens. So my mother made greens, and of course she didn't have the pork chops with it, but she had something else and sweet potatoes.

JENNY: So she was Jewish.

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: How -- was it -- was it fun? Did she enjoy herself?

LUCILLE: Oh yeah, she was very nice, and she was newly married.

And she -- oh, we did talk. We did talk, because she told us, are you over age? I mean, hold old are these girls?

JENNY: You don't have to ask about me. (Inaudible.)

LUCILLE: Well I figured maybe you might be around 30.

JENNY: Oh, very nice of you -- 45.

LUCILLE: Well, you don't look it. Um, she said that she had nothing to do with her husband before marriage. When they got married, they just slept in each other's arms and then had nothing to do with -- I -- you know, everybody was saying, you know, we just sat around and talked about that. And uh, then she finally got -- it was got pregnant and left.

JENNY: Interesting.

LUCILLE: But she-she-she impressed me as being a very, very nice person.

JENNY: Was she -- and she was the one who came to dinner at your house.

LUCILLE: Yes, at my mother's house, all the way up to the Bronx.

JENNY: And how did your mom like her?

LUCILLE: Well, she liked her. You know, she -- what-what would she -- what could she say about it? She was a nice girl, and she was my friend.

JENNY: Yeah. Um, so OK, so there were a number of Jewish girls --

LUCILLE: Yes, I think predominantly, and then there was a number of Italian girls. I don't remember the other girls, and this Rosie Epst -- um, whatever -- what did I say her name was?

JENNY: I think it was Ep-Epstein.

LUCILLE: Epstein, yeah. Uh, she um, she would always tell us about what she had done the last -- you know, couple of nights. Oh, I did meet one g -- oh no, that was the telephone company. That wasn't her.

JENNY: She would tell you about her nighttime exploits?

LUCILLE: Yeah.

JENNY: So she -- was she someone who liked to go out, and --

LUCILLE: Yeah, she liked to go out and she liked to have fun.

JENNY: So you mentioned that you went to some Brooklyn places with-with some of these girls.

LUCILLE: Well, I remember only Enduro's (sp?).

[00:29:57]

JENNY: I feel like I've heard of that place, from maybe other people who -- was that a place that people liked to go from the Navy Yard?

LUCILLE: Yes, yeah.

JENNY: Was it nearby, do you remember?

LUCILLE: I guess it was, because we uh, by a bus always or something.

JENNY: And what was it like?

LUCILLE: It was Italian restaurant.

JENNY: So whe -- if you were working till so late, when were you able to --

LUCILLE: That's -- we had a problem. Uh, I think it was five to 11 that we worked, so we had to find things that were open until 12, and I remember ever getting any time off to go to these places or taking time off to go to these places, but I know we went.

JENNY: So you would have a little bit of a rush, to get somewhere that --

LUCILLE: Yeah, rush to get there, and um, or maybe we took -- didn't take a break and worked till-till 10:30 and went there, I don't know.

JENNY: Do you remember how many of you would go at once?

LUCILLE: There would be quite a few -- quite a bunch. I do remember one incident. We went to this wedding, and this girl was waiting outside. She came early and was waiting outside for us so she was sitting in her car, and her door was open -- you know, unlocked, and uh, someone stole something from her, took her pocketbook or something. So

when she came into the wedding, she was so upset, you know, about that. Just -- that just came to me, I remember that.

JENNY: So she had -- was sitting in her car and they snatched it from --

LUCILLE: They probably opened the door and uh, or I don't know just how they did it, but she didn't have her pocketbook, and she --

JENNY: By the time she got into the wedding.

LUCILLE: Yeah, and she -- when she got to the -- you know, when the rest of us -- we drove up where she was driving. I didn't drive at that time, I was probably with someone, and uh, she was saying, you know what happened, and I forgot to -- uh, to lock my -- well, we didn't think about locking doors. So -- and someone stole her pocketbook. Boy, thought about that in a long time.

JENNY: You remember a lot.

LUCILLE: Yeah.

JENNY: Um, and the weddings, were they, um, were they in big halls? Did you have a --

LUCILLE: Yes, there was a -- it was a big wedding. We went to the uh, chapel first, and then around the corner was the place where they had the reception usually. They were close by, because nobody -- not many people had cars in those time -- in those days.

JENNY: Right. So would you -- how would you get to the weddings, hitching rides?

LUCILLE: Yeah, someone would uh, say, well, if you get in to Brooklyn, I'll be at a certain place, or I'll pick you up at the station, whatever. I don't think -- remember the details.

JENNY: What about other African-American women?

LUCILLE: I don't remember working with anybody else except the ones I mentioned.

JENNY: Is that --

LUCILLE: Adele.

JENNY: OK. What did -- did you have a sense of the other people at the yard, like when you would enter the yard, did you see -- were you part of a crowd?

LUCILLE: Now I know why I don't remember them, because I came in at night, at 5:00, and maybe they were on their way home. I don't -- I know that. And all this time I thought I worked regular hours, but I didn't, I worked evenings.

JENNY: Right. So you didn't have so much a sense of the racial or cultural mix in other parts of the yard.

LUCILLE: No, but we lived across the street from a newly-built, uh, project. Oh, Loretta, how can I forget Loretta? Loretta lived in the projects, and she was married. She had been married -- she was around my age I guess, but she

had been married a long time, so she had two, three little ones, and uh, only thing I can remember now about Loretta, she worked for the airlines and she tr-she went practically all over the world.

JENNY: That was after the Navy Yard.

LUCILLE: Yeah, after the Navy Yard.

JENNY: And was she African-American?

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: OK. And so -- and she was in the projects, um, in Brooklyn? Or --

LUCILLE: Yes, right across the street from the Navy Yard, and that's another reason why I got to be friendly with her, because I think I stayed overnight at her house, because she was married and had children and all that, and my -- my mother said, well, that's all right. You can stay over there.

JENNY: I see, so sometimes you didn't have those late night commutes back home.

LUCILLE: No, yeah, because when we had the late night things and going to the restaurants, we would get out later and sometimes the trains wouldn't be going to the Bronx or going at a very late time, and uh, my mother didn't like the idea of me being on a train by -- you know, by myself.

JENNY: Right.

LUCILLE: So I said, I could stay with Loretta. So she says,
OK, you can go.

JENNY: So wait, Loretta would be part of the gang going to
the restaurant, and then you guys would -- um, and do you
remember her last name?

[00:35:01]

LUCILLE: Carerra (sp?).

JENNY: And so she went on to work for -- as a flight
attendant?

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: OK. I wonder what-what she's up to now.

LUCILLE: (Inaudible.) I can't -- if you asked me yesterday, I
wouldn't -- if you asked me, do you know a girl by the name
of Loretta Carerra? I would say, no, I don't.

JENNY: Memory is a really an interesting thing, isn't it?

LUCILLE: Yeah, do you come across that?

Q2: (Affirmative.) Oh, yeah.

JENNY: You don't really know what's there sometimes. It's --
it's interesting, but it is there.

LUCILLE: This is my first time.

JENNY: Your -- your memory is much better than a lot of the
people I've talked to, actually.

LUCILLE: Oh, really?

JENNY: Yeah. Um, so -- so there was Loretta, and what -- I mean, were these -- were -- were all of you people who normally did a lot of mixing with people of other races, or was this kind of new to these girls, do you think?

LUCILLE: I went to Wadley High School. You saw how many white girls were in there.

JENNY: So you were totally used to that.

LUCILLE: Yeah, and -- and Wadley High School was located on 116th Street, between 7th and 8th.

JENNY: I wonder if it's still there.

LUCILLE: It is still there. It's a, um, a co-ed school now. It was all girls at the time I went.

JENNY: Um, did you -- is your memory that the -- the atmosphere was pleasant, that people treated each other well?

LUCILLE: Well, these girls -- you know, I can't worry about the people who don't, so I -- you know, the people who were nice to me, I was nice to them, and I -- if someone did -- oh, I do another -- another memory I have. We all went out on a Sunday. We went to, um, the end of New York -- what's the name?

JENNY: Down at Battery Park?

LUCILLE: Battery Park, and we had to stop -- no, that was telephone, sorry.

JENNY: That's OK.

LUCILLE: I can't -- that's not that memory.

JENNY: Um, do you remember having a sense of other things going on at the yard? For example, the ships themselves, any contact with them?

LUCILLE: No, no. I told you, I never saw it by -- maybe it was Daniella I told this to. She asked if I knew any of the sailors. I didn't know any sailors, because, uh, we never saw them, and we never saw the people who worked in the -- I wasn't a Rosie the Riveter, so I wasn't with those women who did that sort of work.

JENNY: What did you wear to work?

LUCILLE: Just plain clothes, you know.

JENNY: A skirt?

LUCILLE: Skirt, blouse, and we didn't wear pants very often in those days. In fact, when I went to the telephone company, pants were not allowed, and they-they wanted to -- wanted us to come with hats and gloves.

JENNY: At the telephone company?

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: OK.

LUCILLE: At first -- when I first went in.

JENNY: But not at the Navy Yard.

LUCILLE: Oh no.

JENNY: So just --

LUCILLE: And that was after the Navy Yard. The Navy Yard
accepted you anyway, just don't come in without clothes.

JENNY: Doesn't seem like too much to ask.

LUCILLE: Especially when it's cold.

JENNY: Um, and do you remember, like, was-was the -- was it
comfortable where you worked? Was it -- was it warm when
it needed to be warm, and do you have a memory of the
temperature or the sensations?

LUCILLE: You know, when I was young, I used to wear anklets the
whole winter. My mother would always say, you're going to
freeze your legs, but I didn't feel cold. Did you feel
cold when you were younger? Like --

JENNY: I definitely can't get my kids to wear -- I feel like
they're -- my kids are impervious to cold. I can't -- they
don't seem to feel it.

LUCILLE: No, no, they don't feel cold. I feel cold now.

JENNY: So you wore -- so did you wear anklets in the winter
to the Navy Yard too?

LUCILLE: Oh no, I-I-I don't remember. I really don't.

JENNY: OK.

LUCILLE: But I didn't wear anklets at -- no, I did wear anklets
at high school, so I must have worn -- I could have worn
them there. I don't know.

JENNY: Do you remember the mix of men and women? We've only mentioned women. Were there actually -- were there men where you were working?

LUCILLE: We, of the typists, some of the typists were men. Like two, like among 50.

JENNY: Um, and did you -- did you get to know them at all?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: So they weren't hanging out too much with the girls?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: Um, and any other -- did you -- did you -- do you remember seeing men in the -- in the working environment?

LUCILLE: Yes, there were the bosses, and there were the, uh, the navy men.

JENNY: And -- and how did you end up seeing them? In what way would you --

LUCILLE: Like I'd be walking through -- like that. Not uh, not anybody would give you work to do or something like that, so --

JENNY: And in terms of the work itself, you would type documents, and do you remember what you would -- what would happen then? Would you --

LUCILLE: I guess one of those girls, either Ms. Rossoff or the other lady from Bermuda, came by and picked them up. I don't know.

[00:40:01]

JENNY: Do you recall if the work load was heavy? Was it stressful?

LUCILLE: No, you don't get stressed at 18 or 19 or 20. I think that came in later, people got stressed. When I -- I got stressed in the telephone company.

JENNY: Um, when -- there's a woman who, um, whose name was Lucille Kolkin, and she was also an office worker -- um, I don't think in Building 77 -- who -- her letters have survived, her husband, and um, they're a lot of fun to read, and she would describe being quite bored sometimes on the night shift.

LUCILLE: I guess that happened.

JENNY: Did -- I was curious about whether you have any memories of that.

LUCILLE: No, not -- I don't have any memories of it, but I'm sure it must have happened, you know, that you'd be bored.

JENNY: Um, and did you ever, for any reason, move among buildings or have any --

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: -- errands or reasons to move around?

LUCILLE: No, only to go home.

JENNY: OK, and do you remember which entrance you came and went from?

LUCILLE: The front entrance.

JENNY: So Sand Street.

LUCILLE: Is it Sand Street?

JENNY: Sand Street was the -- was the main entrance, yes, but there were entrances on other streets along flushing, too.

LUCILLE: But Sand Street is that main street?

JENNY: Yeah.

LUCILLE: And-and another thing. It wasn't a bus that I took, it was a trolley car.

JENNY: Ah, OK. I'm just going to show you this map. It's a little bit confusing, but here's Sand Street. So, um, High Street would be over here. Um, if it --

LUCILLE: Where the subway was.

JENNY: Yeah, and so it may be that you took a trolley up here. This -- this was the main entrance. I'm just trying to see where Building 77 is. Uh, it's really ha -- oh, here it is. You were way over here. Um, I actually have interviewed someone else who worked in this building. I'll-I'll get you that name. So you -- I wonder if you may have come in one of these other entrances on flushing. Do you remember if it was a long ride or walk to your building from the entrance?

LUCILLE: No, I don't remember that.

JENNY: OK. OK, hold on to that. Um, uh, so you -- do you have any memories of actually seeing ships at all?

LUCILLE: Yes, I've seen ships. You know, sometimes we -- if we walked out another exit and it was in the back we would see ships, but other than that, if I came out all the time from the front, I couldn't see these ships that are lined up back here. I didn't have too much curiosity about that.

JENNY: Um --

LUCILLE: Sand Street. Loretta is dead. She died quite a few years ago.

JENNY: It sounds like you've stayed in touch with her for awhile.

LUCILLE: I did. I knew her daughters and they came by to see me, and all that sort of thing.

JENNY: Do you, um, is there anyone from that time that you -- that you are still in touch with?

LUCILLE: No, nobody.

JENNY: But Loretta you were in touch with up till the time of her death?

LUCILLE: You know, it was like, I'd go someplace and I'd see her, and uh, we'd exchange telephone numbers, and maybe she might call me or something like that, but not constant. You know, my children were little then, so I was very busy. These are my children, these three girls.

JENNY: Wow. Now wait, which one is, um --

LUCILLE: Pam.

JENNY: OK.

LUCILLE: They're quite a few years in between. OK, Pamela is 52, April is 56, and Leslie is 60. So quite a few --

JENNY: Right.

LUCILLE: -- years in between.

JENNY: Um, and when -- and when did you marry? How did -- was that while you were still at the yard, or after?

LUCILLE: I think it was after -- 1947.

JENNY: Do you remember if, um, any of the girls that you worked with would date men who worked at the yard as well? Was there that kind of --

LUCILLE: I don't think so, because, you know, we never had a conversation like that, and none of the fellas came by to see the girls, so I don't know anything about that.

JENNY: But hearing that anecdote about, um, the Jewish girl talking about marr-you know, having nothing to do with her husband and then marrying, it-it makes me so curious about what kinds of conversations you were having during those breaks and meals. It sounds like they-they were very personal.

LUCILLE: Uh, yes, they were personal. Uh, there's a-a play that was coming out at that time, and everybody -- "don't

throw bouquets at me, uh, your smile is just like mine," or something like that.

[00:45:07]

JENNY: That's one title?

LUCILLE: No, no, that's -- that's -- those are the lyrics.

JENNY: Oh, oh, I see, OK.

LUCILLE: "People will say they're in love." Uh, that was a large play. Everybody was going to see it, and then they made a movie.

JENNY: Did you go?

LUCILLE: Oh, yeah, sure. I didn't go to the play, we went to the movie. Jack, um, that Australian, did the same show on Channel 13 recently.

JENNY: "Don't throw bouquets at me, your smile is just like mine," what was the next line?

LUCILLE: "People will say we're in love." I don't remember --

JENNY: Oh, right.

LUCILLE: -- the title. I think maybe the title was, "People Will Say -- " that does sound familiar to you?

JENNY: It all sounds very familiar. I'm going -- I'm curious to figure out what that is.

LUCILLE: Well, you're 45, she's ten, so --

(Laughter.)

JENNY: Um, do you remember other y-movies or plays or just events that were happening out in the world that people would talk about at work?

LUCILLE: That one that I know, because she's -- in fact, she was going with someone at that -- the girl who was talk -- this is a younger girl. I don't remember her name of course, but she was just -- she was in the first throes of, uh, of love with this guy that she had just met. They both lived I the Bronx -- this is a Jewish girl, too -- and she used to tell -- talk constantly about him.

JENNY: Sounds like Lucy, this letter-writer, um, whose letters we've-we've uh, we've read, was very much in love with her husband, who was in -- who was in the army, and um, she would talk about how she had brought his picture to work and shown it to everyone.

LUCILLE: Oh yeah, I guess that happened, yeah.

JENNY: This girl sounds like her. Um, so and -- so that's why you remember that?

LUCILLE: Yeah, because she would talk about this play that was on Broadway.

JENNY: Did people talk about the war?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: Hmm.

LUCILLE: I could say no, because we didn't. I mean, the group I was going out with. We'd say I -- we'll be glad when it's over, but not details, you know. My brother was in -- or both of my brothers were in the service. One was in Okanawa. He joined the uh, 369th, which is a -- a group -- anti-aircraft group that was in Harlem, and I don't know whether the building is still there or not, but anyway, that's my oldest brother, Harry, and he uh, he stayed in there until -- when he came back, he had been -- he had been in Hawaii all this time and when he came back, he was -- he couldn't wait. He went out every night. He'd get in the bathtub and get all spruced up and winter -- do a (inaudible) man. He got real sick. You know, I guess he went out half-wet -- I don't know, ca-wash his hair, and -- ugh.

JENNY: But he was OK?

LUCILLE: No, he died. He died from pneumonia, and he was going out with a nurse, and she came furiously into my mother's house saying, "Pneumonia is the easiest cure! Why I -- why didn't you take him -- why didn't you bring him to Harlem Hospital?" I don't know, sometimes you do things in kind of a backward way.

JENNY: And that was shortly after he got out of the service?

LUCILLE: 1941.

JENNY: Wow.

LUCILLE: 1945, 46. Well, during '45, I guess it was.

JENNY: Right. And where was your other brother?

LUCILLE: Uh, he had a hard time getting into the service, and he wasn't -- he wanted to get into the 369th because of all his friends were in there, and he got into another group and um, he didn't have a hard time. Uh, the war was coming to an end anyway.

JENNY: Right.

LUCILLE: Then my third brother was too young and he had to go into, um -- what was the war doing?

JENNY: Korea?

LUCILLE: The second one. He was in Korea.

JENNY: Um --

LUCILLE: The Korean War.

JENNY: -- but at work, no -- not much talk of the war.

LUCILLE: No. I don't remember any talk about the war, and I can't even bring it up from, you know, oh, I remember so-and-so did this and (inaudible).

JENNY: Do you remember what you talked about from your life with the women there?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: Um, if you had to say --

[00:50:05]

LUCILLE: I told you this. I told you I wasn't a good candidate.

JENNY: No, you're gr -- are you kidding? You're great! I'm just -- I'm pushing you as far as I can.

LUCILLE: I hope you do because it's s -- it helps.

JENNY: Um, I'm also -- I have a list of questions from Daniella, and I'm making very sure that I've answered all of those, because since she's representing the Navy Yard, she has very particular things she's interested in, and actually a couple of her questions are -- which I think are good -- one is, what was your worst experience at the Brooklyn Navy Yard?

LUCILLE: I can't think of any, because, you know, I have a habit of something that really hurts me and is disgusting, I -- I got it out -- I get it out of my mind, because I don't -- because I have a habit of also going over and over and over things that were dis-displeasing me, so I said, I- I don't -- I don't want to think about that, and that's what I did. So I can't remember anything, and I can't even remember trying -- not trying to think about anything that was disgusting.

JENNY: And what about best experience?

LUCILLE: Hmm?

JENNY: What about best experience?

LUCILLE: Meeting those women. We had so many, uh, things that we did, and-and we got to know one another, although I never wrote anybody. The only one that I remained friendly with was Rose Epstein.

JENNY: And she was the one who went on to a-a-a new --

LUCILLE: To (inaudible). We both went together. Maybe that's why I remember, because I -- the-the time was closer.

JENNY: Do you reme-you haven't mentioned her so much in the context of the -- the gang at the Navy Yard.

LUCILLE: She went with us.

JENNY: Was she -- she was part of that too?

LUCILLE: Yeah, she was part of that gang.

JENNY: And did you -- you mention that, um, there was Francis who came to your house, and you stayed over with Loretta --

LUCILLE: Yeah.

JENNY: -- do you remember any other girls whose homes you visited, or who visited your home?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: So that was --

LUCILLE: Only f -- only Loretta.

JENNY: And um, and so you and Rose went on to the telephone company. Was that also in Brooklyn?

LUCILLE: No, it was, um, downtown Manhattan.

JENNY: And how long were you there?

LUCILLE: It was days till I left. I was the-I wasn't there very long, but I quit the tele -- I mean, I resigned or whatever you might say. Uh, when I was 63, I left, uh, the telephone company, but I was working right here in [Hemstead?]. I had been transferred.

JENNY: Wow, so you were really -- you hung in there a long time with this --

LUCILLE: Yeah, it was 40 years, I think.

JENNY: Wow.

LUCILLE: So it must have been -- I must have gone in there '23. '22 or '23.

JENNY: And did Rose stay in as well?

LUCILLE: I don't know. She might have transferred out of where we were working, uh, at the time. We worked two blocks away from Bellevue Hospital on 37th Street. 30 -- in the 30s. Maybe it was 30th Street. There was a small telephone company there.

JENNY: And what was the c-telephone company called? I know it's changed names over the years.

LUCILLE: Oh, it was New York Tel at that time.

JENNY: It was New York Telephone, OK.

LUCILLE: Now it's Verizon. After many other names.

JENNY: Yeah. And do you know if Rose is still living?

LUCILLE: No, I don't.

JENNY: Um --

LUCILLE: I know Loretta is dead.

JENNY: And you said she passed quite awhile ago?

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: Um --

LUCILLE: Adele, I don't know about her, either.

JENNY: So the memory -- the -- s-hanging with the girls was one of the fun things.

LUCILLE: Oh, yeah, we had a lot of fun together.

JENNY: And um, did any of the others, did they ever come with you to go horseback riding? You said you and Adele would do that.

LUCILLE: Uh, her husband sometimes, and he had a friend that she was trying to hook me up with, but we never did go out. He came to see me once, but that was it.

JENNY: And did you have a boyfriend at that time?

LUCILLE: Yes, I did. I had the -- had the love of my life, Johnny Rice.

JENNY: What a name, that's fantastic. So you were going with him when you were -- at -- when you were at the Navy Yard.

LUCILLE: Well, I wasn't exactly going with him right at that time, because he was in the service also. He was a Marine.

JENNY: And is he the person -- did you end up --

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: OK.

[00:54:48]

LUCILLE: I-I finally met my husband because my brother got married, and his wife had a friend. She was engaged to our -- going around with this fellow's fr-brother, his brother, who was in the 369th also, so uh, his brother, Lester, used to come and visit her. You know, "Hi, Mom," he would call her, her mother, you know, because they were very close, and uh, he knew that that was his -- his uh, b-brother's girlfriend. So -- and I happened to be there one day, and he says, doesn't that girl Lucille ever come to visit you anymore? So she-she says, that boy is bothering me about, uh, seeing you, so why don't you come -- why don't you visit me? He'll be over Sunday, so I went.

JENNY: And that was your husband.

LUCILLE: Yeah, that was my husband.

JENNY: And what was his name?

LUCILLE: Lester Ford.

JENNY: OK.

LUCILLE: There he is, with the, uh, dove above him.

JENNY: Oh, OK, and what did -- what work did he go on to do?

LUCILLE: He worked for the, uh, Veterans Service. It's a big building. The veterans have a big building on 23rd Street. He worked there for quite a long time.

JENNY: OK.

LUCILLE: Not long enough, because he came home -- he-he resigned, he retired before I did. So I said, I can't go home.

JENNY: Crashing into each other.

LUCILLE: I can't go home again. So I worked the ten years, and then I retired.

JENNY: And how long have you been actually living here?

LUCILLE: Uh, 50 years.

JENNY: 50? Wow. In this house.

LUCILLE: Yeah.

JENNY: (Inaudible.)

LUCILLE: I think it's 50. I came here '57.

JENNY: That's 50 years.

Q2: What happened to your -- to your first boyfriend, Johnny, that you were with?

LUCILLE: Oh, Johnny got -- had tuberculosis and he was in the hospital, and I never visited him. Then 40 years later, he came to visit me. So --

LUCILLE: And what had happened to him in the interim?

JENNY: He got married.

LUCILLE: Did he get --

JENNY: He waited until he was almost 30 to get married. I married when I was 24.

LUCILLE: So, did he get the TB while he was in the service, or right after he came back?

JENNY: Oh, before he had -- he had strings of it, and he had been, uh, uh, sick before he went into the service.

LUCILLE: So when he came back it really --

JENNY: Yeah. He got sicker, and he went in the hospital.

LUCILLE: Was he from the Bronx also? Did he live --

JENNY: No, he was from Harlem. I don't know whether you know about the Dunbar Apartments. It's a whole block full of, uh, the same buildings, and it was all connected. They made one -- I think they made two -- one in the, uh, Bronx, and then the other one was in Harlem. It was very nice. And, uh, we had a -- all of us kids -- I knew him from when I was a child -- uh, we had a, um, a park at the end of my block. It was a very, very long block. It extended from [McCoombs?] to [M Place?] to 7th Avenue, and uh, they had a park -- a-a-a playground right down at the end of the block, and at that playground, we used to do a lot -- play a lot of handball, and -- boys and girls -- and we just had a great time down there. I-I-you know, times aren't like -- we used to go out in groups. You know, what we would do, we would go in the summertime to Brooklyn, and I tell my kids this, and boy -- bo-both boys and girls -- and we'd line up the uh, whole subway train, and we'd sing. You

know, sing with -- you know how you sing and you move about like this? Just -- it was with just us in the -- in this -- I guess people say, I don't want to go in that noisy car. So we would have a great time. And then we'd get to, um, Coney Island, and go on the, uh, what's that big one? The Cyclone.

Q2: Yeah.

LUCILLE: Have a ball of fun. So nobody was really p -- and then on Sundays, we'd walk to the corner of 7th Avenue and get the, uh, double-decker bus, ride all the way downtown to the Arc de Triomphe, and uh, get out there, then walk around, then get back on the bus, and w -- then we'd stop at Snookie's (sp?), who was also a friend of mine, and have s-sodas -- uh, ice cream sodas. His wife still was running that place for awhile and then she got rid of it.

[01:00:06]

JENNY: Where was Snookie's?

LUCILLE: 137th Street and 7th Avenue.

JENNY: That sounds like a really fun neighborhood.

LUCILLE: Oh, it was. We had a great time in that Snookie's place.

JENNY: And so -- and then you left that for the Bronx, that -- that whole thing.

LUCILLE: Yeah, yeah.

JENNY: But then you did connect with Johnny again, years later.

LUCILLE: Yes, when they went to -- into the service.

JENNY: I see.

LUCILLE: I wouldn't think anybody would be interested in this stuff.

JENNY: Well, it's not really on the topic, but we're just curious. Um, I'm -- I have gotten through a lot of my questions here. If either of you have things you want to, um, mention, I'm -- I would love that. There's other things we can use to prod at Lucille's excellent memory.

LUCILLE: That's a first.

Q2: I guess I'm curious about, um, so you -- you went pretty often between Manhattan and the Bronx and Brooklyn, and I wondered, were a lot of people going between the boroughs like that?

LUCILLE: I don't know. I guess if they had a reason to, I guess they did. But I had a reason to go to Brooklyn, because I was working there for s-maybe -- how long was that? About four years? Three years?

JENNY: You said, um, we have a -- you said nine -- you thought 1942 to '45, so three-ish.

LUCILLE: Yeah, three years, yeah. That's not a very long time. But -- and I didn't go to visit, uh, Loretta, because I

think she moved. And then you -- when you get kids, you don't go anywhere. You just work, home, and to all the children's s-things.

JENNY: Where did you and your husband live after you married, before you came here?

LUCILLE: We lived with my mother in the Bronx, then we moved -- all three of us moved here. My brother -- my younger brother was, um, in the Korean War, so he went -- he was in the service at that time.

JENNY: Let's see.

LUCILLE: So that's it.

JENNY: I guess again, just wondering about any other kind of physical memories -- sights, sounds, the weather, the feel of being at the navy yard, any of that.

LUCILLE: I know it used to get very, very cold in the wintertimes. Winters were very cold, but um -- because I was growing up then and not that kid I used to be, so --

JENNY: No more bobby socks.

LUCILLE: No, no more bobby socks.

JENNY: Yeah, I think it is really cold there. Whenever I'm there at a cold time of year now, it's -- and you -- did you say you had gone back for a tour at some point?

LUCILLE: No.

JENNY: If you would be interested in that --

LUCILLE: Really?

JENNY: -- um, you could definitely do that.

LUCILLE: Oh, I'd love to do that.

JENNY: Daniella is -- is a wonderful tour guide. She's the one that you spoke to on the phone.

LUCILLE: Probably I'd seen more of the Navy Yard with her than I lived through, because I didn't see anything but Building 77 at the time I went there.

JENNY: Do you -- I think I asked you this before but I'm just going to ask again -- do you remember if you -- if you worked -- if you went up in an elevator or stairs, or whether you were on a ground floor?

LUCILLE: No, it wasn't on a ground floor. I don't know, and I'm sure I didn't walk up the stairs. There probably was an elevator, but um, I'm not conscious of (inaudible) --

JENNY: And do you remember anything about windows, or what you could see out of the windows?

LUCILLE: No. Seems like everything I did was right in the middle of the building -- in the middle of the room. I didn't see outside the windows or even look out for any reason.

JENNY: And did -- and you've described your work as purely typing. Was there ever any -- and messaging before that --

LUCILLE: Yeah.

JENNY: Was there ever anything else that you recall doing?

LUCILLE: No, nothing.

JENNY: Um, oh, I know. There was one more thing I wanted to ask. Um, do you recall -- some of the other women that I've talked to -- encountered -- a-and this may have been more during the day shift -- there were certain events that happened at the yard -- a visit from a --

LUCILLE: A dignitary.

JENNY: -- a dignitary, ships, um, being launched, just moments where there was a ki-a-a-that the-the yard kind of came together and knew that something was going on. Do you remember anything like that?

LUCILLE: I read about some of them in the paper that, uh, somebody had cracked a bottle and that something that was launched, but I never went to it.

JENNY: Do you mean the Ship Worker, the Navy Yard paper, when you say "the paper?"

[01:04:57]

LUCILLE: I don't know -- I don't remember what paper, because I don't remember ever seeing a Navy Yard paper.

JENNY: Hmm, OK. So -- so no -- no big events that you can recall.

LUCILLE: No. It'll be -- if it -- if we did have one it would be in the daytime, and if you come in at five, everything's over.

JENNY: Right. What about, um, some of the victories, uh, when the -- in the sense of things turning? Do you remember how that -- what the atmosphere was around that at the yard?

LUCILLE: No, I don't remember. Probably happened, but I didn't remember.

JENNY: Do you remember at home, how that -- how that felt, to know that we were beginning to win the war?

LUCILLE: I just heard a lot of talk, but uh, I don't remember anybody making conversation about it.

JENNY: OK. Any other questions you guys might have?

Q2: Did you write to your brothers when they were in the service?

LUCILLE: Very seldom. My mother did most of the writing, and she would get a letter and she would tell me what they had said, but -- so I figured she's doing it, I don't have to do it. I guess I'm a little bit lazy.

JENNY: Um, but now you keep mentioning a picture that you were trying to find. What is that a picture of?

LUCILLE: Yes, it's a picture of all the clerical women, and I've got an hour right -- I was on the top, uh, rung. You

know, they have -- elevated. Uh, or we were on steps or something, and I was on that top row in the back.

JENNY: So it was really a formal picture --

LUCILLE: Yes.

JENNY: -- that they spent some time organizing.

LUCILLE: Nice size picture.

JENNY: Do you remember that picture being taken?

LUCILLE: Yes, we were told to come in, and you're going to have your picture taken, and uh, I guess it was our supervisor who -- who settled it. We're going to go -- we're going to be at the top, uh, rung or whatever, and uh, that's what we did, followed orders.

JENNY: Do you remember what the occasion was for that picture?

LUCILLE: No, I guess they -- I figured that they just wanted to take our picture, the people who worked in the Na-in, uh, Building 77.

JENNY: So it was a -- everyone who worked in the building, do you think?

LUCILLE: Uh, the clerical end of it.

JENNY: Oh, I hope you find that. That's really --

LUCILLE: I -- yeah -- I'm, you know, I have pictures in that cabinet over there. Last night that's what I did, looked all through it.

JENNY: But it's -- you've been here long enough. It's got to be in this house.

LUCILLE: It's got to be here someplace.

JENNY: The problem is when you've been in a place 50 years, I bet you -- there are a lot of stuff.

LUCILLE: (Inaudible.) But I saw it recently, because I saw it, uh -- I was throwing some things out and I said, I didn't want to throw that out. I s-sat there and looked at it, looked at the p-people I had known, found Rose.

JENNY: Oh, gosh.

LUCILLE: (Inaudible.)

JENNY: It would be -- now having heard about some of these girls, it would be really fun to see them.

LUCILLE: I am sti-still looking. I'm -- I haven't given up.

JENNY: Um, another question, I-I know in some of the women who worked in the shops, like the pipe fitting and things like that, they had various levels, or classes they would call it. I was a pipe fitter, second class, and then first class, and you sort of worked up through these promotions. Did -- and your pay, of course, would increase a little bit. Do you recall whether that was the case in the -- in the office?

LUCILLE: Probably. Well, there must have been a change from being a messenger, because it was change in pay, and uh, I

guess -- I don't know of anybody who went from clerk typist to something else, because there wasn't very much time.

JENNY: Do you remember whether your status increased over the course of the three years?

LUCILLE: I wasn't interested, because I wanted to leave, you know. I wanted to go to the telephone company, so --

JENNY: So does that mean you were not -- you did -- that you weren't so crazy about the work?

LUCILLE: No, that doesn't mean that. It just means that um, I was re-ready to move on. I guess it wasn't exciting enough for me, because it -- the only excitement was when we would gather together and go someplace, but the daily routine wasn't that exciting.

JENNY: Right. And was the telephone company more exciting?

LUCILLE: Yes, although again, it was all girls, but we did have exciting times. We used to go to lunch a lot, also.

JENNY: In the telephone company, or --

LUCILLE: Yeah. Oh, you wanted to say, uh, was there anything that stood out. So we would go everywhere, and one time we went to Chinatown, the telephone company girls and myself, and this white man walks through the door, and he stands up, puts his hand on his hips -- because there wasn't many of us -- and he says, "Ugh, I see you'll let anything in here!"

[01:10:02]

And that went through me. I felt so terrible. But what made it not so terrible was because the girl said, "Don't pay that fool no mind." You know, they were -- that wa -- they were in my corner, and that-that made me feel better. So I try to not think of that anymore.

JENNY: Yeah, (noise). And did anyone reproach him to his face?

LUCILLE: No, they said, "Lucille, don't pay him no mind. He's a crazy man."

JENNY: And that was -- that was with the -- that was with the phone company girls. It seems like in both of your work places you found a great bunch of friends.

LUCILLE: Yes. Y-yeah, the telephone company, I had great friends, too.

JENNY: Did you ever go to a place like Chinatown with the Navy Yard girls?

LUCILLE: No, and I used to go on -- uh, like, my family, we'd go on our own, and I never encountered anything like that. The Chinese people were very nice.

JENNY: Yeah.

LUCILLE: And they never -- only one time, when I went out with Johnny, he took me to Ruby Foo's on 7th Avenue and, uh -- and (inaudible). You know where Ruby Foo's is? And, uh,

he ordered a drink, and he -- and they n-never -- maybe they thought we were too young, but they never brought his drink. So I don't know what that was all about.

JENNY: Was that before he went into the service?

LUCILLE: Yeah, long time before he went to the service.

JENNY: Hmm. Is Ruby Foo's still there?

Q2: Yep. Well, at least there's a Ruby Foo's -- I don't know if it's the same one --

JENNY: Wow.

Q2: -- on 7th.

LUCILLE: Someone went to Ruby Foo's recently and mentioned it - mentioned Ruby Foo's, and I said, that name sounds familiar.

JENNY: And then you remember this --

LUCILLE: That's why when I looked at you two, because I wanted to --

Q2: Yeah, yeah.

LUCILLE: -- wanted you to confirm it.

Q2: It has a really, really big sign. That's the only reason I know about it.

JENNY: And she doesn't even live here, and she knows about it!

Q2: I'm originally from Indiana.

JENNY: She's leaving on Monday, so she just barely got to
come and be part of this.

LUCILLE: OK, so let's have some lunch.

JENNY: Sure!

LUCILLE: Good.

JENNY: Um, I am content for the moment. How about you guys?

Q2: (Affirmative.)

LUCILLE: OK.

JENNY: That's great. Can we take you to --

LUCILLE: It's going to be cold lunch, but --

JENNY: Oh, you know, you don't have to serve us lunch. My
goodness.

LUCILLE: That's not what you said. You said, "We want lunch!"

JENNY: I did not! Turn off that tape recorder, they're going
to fire me!

LUCILLE: Oh, was that on the tape recorder? It wasn't on, was
it?

Q2: Oh it is, but it's j -- I'm turning it off now.

JENNY: I'm just joking.

LUCILLE: Good. I know you're joking.

JENNY: Daniella would say, "That Jenny, such a glutton. I
knew she'd do anything for lunch."

[1:12:44]

END OF FILE 1

LUCILLE: -- get back to the city, you'll be starving.

JENNY: Well, that is very, very sweet of you.

LUCILLE: (Inaudible) cheese sandwiches on rye.

JENNY: That sounds heavenly. Um, all right. Where did you find that picture?

Q2: It's right in the beginning, because (inaudible) so -- but --

JENNY: Oh, OK.

Q2: It goes through a couple poems and stories and stuff, and then right where --

JENNY: This is really a fantastic document.

Q2: I noticed in your -- in your yearbook that your nickname was Lou. Did people -- do people still call you Lou?

LUCILLE: They -- I was, you know -- I know that loo is a toilet in London.

Q2: Oh, yeah.

LUCILLE: So I uh -- but I didn't know it at that time.

Q2: Yeah.

LUCILLE: And uh, when I said, uh -- that's what they also called me, Lou, but L-O-U, and I didn't know there was an L-O-U, so they put it L-O-O.

JENNY: What a fabulous picture! I have to say, I think you look exactly the same. I really do.

LUCILLE: How much money do you want?

JENNY: I feel like I would know that was you in a second. A little mischief, huh?

LUCILLE: That's what they used to say.

JENNY: That is really great. What a fantastic document to have.

LUCILLE: Oh, and you don't have yours?

JENNY: I don't have any of it.

LUCILLE: Oh.

JENNY: I really wish I did, because I'm already forgetting people's names. That is really, really great.

LUCILLE: Um, this is a picture of my mother. We used to go to -- (inaudible) church around the corner which was a Presbyterian church. That's my mother.

JENNY: Oh, wow.

LUCILLE: And that was some group of women that, uh --

JENNY: I love their --

LUCILLE: -- did some kind of work at the church.

JENNY: I love their dresses.

LUCILLE: You really -- you know, this style -- I have an old coat, and I'm trying to get my granddaughter to take it over, because it -- it's so cute, you know?

JENNY: Yeah, I think they -- some of these clothes were beautiful. This is really great. So you were in the

athletic club. What kinds of things did you do, do you remember?

LUCILLE: No. I'm not very athletic.

JENNY: Did you keep horseback riding?

LUCILLE: Yes, I did that for awhile until it got -- till I got pregnant.

JENNY: Yeah.

LUCILLE: I didn't think it was such a good idea. So everything is ready.

END OF FILE