

**Joan Hoffman  
Civilian**

**Interviewed on  
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by Adam Armstrong**

**Q:** Where and when were you born?

**JH:** I was born in Canada in 1923. My mother and father went to Canada after the first world war, and we were there for about six years. And there were four of us born there. And then my father sent mommy and we four kids home to England for six months to meet our relatives, because he was one of thirteen children and mother was one of nine. So, there were plenty and we knew they would never be able to come and visit us. So, he sent us and he stayed there. And we were getting ready to come back to Canada, having visited everybody, when mother got a cable from Dad saying stay there I'm coming home. And you know in those days, children never asked any questions of parents. And the only thing we could think of was Dad never had a decent job in Canada. He worked in a flour mill and the mine. And I think he borrowed the money to send us and stayed there and worked there until he got the money and paid it and then came home. So, we were in England from then on.

**Q:** What was it like growing up in England before the war?

**JH:** Well, we were fortunate because when we first went over there, my father got a job managing a riding school. So, we had horses. Basically, our lives lived around the horses. The stable yard was in the middle of Cambridge, which was a big university town. We used to... we went to school, but you had to walk to school and it had to be a good mile or two from the house. We walked and we rode bicycles. We never had a car, but we had horses. And kids... I never knew it until after I was talking to some girls that I graduated with. We went to Perse High School for girls. And they used to be talking and saying, "Let's go for a swim," because the river Cam went all the way around Cambridge. And they had two or three places which were made into bathing... so, that you could go down, put steps so that you could go swimming there. And I used to feel *Oh I wish I could go with them*. But I knew I had to go home, because my father needed me. We worked in the yard. I mean we had grooms there sometimes. We had horses that livery there. But whoever, I mean, the horses had to be fed every day and the stables mucked out and groomed. So, we were always busy with the horses. But the other girls, I heard, were so jealous. They used to think 'You can go riding anytime you like.' We used to have to go riding whether we wanted to or not, because you know, it was just one of the things. That was sort of right until... and even after I left school and got a job, he still would sometimes call me early in the morning, because we had a field that was two miles from the house. We used to turn out a couple of the horses there if they had been working very hard, let them have a day or two in the field. They could just relax. But when you wanted them again, he'd sometimes call me at 4:30 or 5 in the morning and say, "I want you to get up and go fetch the two horses. So, I'd walk the two miles and get the horses and come back and have breakfast and give the horses to him. And I get changed and then go to school. And if I only had one horse, I could take it to the field

next door, which had a five barbed gate, which didn't have barbed wire on it. Ours had barbed wire on it. So, I could get up on the gate and then get up on the horse because it was bareback we didn't take a saddle or anything. But I have to tell you, it was war time and we're talking about it now, and just up the road from our field, there was a small factory that was making some small article that was necessary for the war. And every morning as I was coming home, I would see these... oh, many, many, many dozens and dozens of elderly men, older men riding their bicycles to go to the little factory further up. And I just saw them and used to say hello. But one time I was starting to lead the two horses, and I couldn't get on them, and so I was walking them home and one of the men riding his bicycle said, "Would you like a leg up?" So, I said, "Oh, thank you." So, he got off his bicycle and put his bicycle down and put his lunchbox down and gave me a leg up. So, I didn't have to walk home. I saw them every day. They didn't know who I was and I certainly didn't know who they were, but it was just nice. And you won't believe that fifteen years ago, the last time I went back to England to stay with my sister, and I was told she had a group of ladies with her. And I was talking to one of the ladies and she said to me, "Do you still live in Cambridge?" I said, "No. I married a Yank. And I've just come from the states to visit my sister." So, I said, "Do you live in Cambridge?" She said, "No, we live on Madingley Road. But you would know that because that's a road that goes outside of Cambridge." I said, "I know Madingley Road because we used to have a field up there. And my father used to send me up there to get horses when he needed them." She said, "Would you believe that when we were living there years ago, we'd be in bed and it would be 5:30 maybe quarter to six and we'd here clip clop, clip clop, clip clop." And she said, "I couldn't understand it what that was, so I'd get up and move the curtain and look and outside." And she said, "There'd be a young girl and a young boy riding horses and they would be singing. And they would look and if they saw me they would wave at me." I said, "Well, that was me and my brother. Because my brother said if we're awake, everybody should be awake. So, we sang loudly." But what are the chances of meeting a lady? I mean I've been here sixty-three years so I've been gone from them for forty-five years to meet someone who actually knew or saw us.

**Q:** Small world. So, you said you lived in Cambridge, England. (Yes). Is that where you came over from with your family?

**JH:** Yes, I lived in Cambridge. And Cambridge is in East Anglia, which is a flat part of the country and there were airfields around and a couple of them were taken by the G.I.s, taken over by the Americans when they came and the others were... There wasn't too much in the way of entertainment around. So, they went and bring the G.I.s in, well any of the people, servicemen, would be brought into Cambridge in trucks if they had a forty-eight-hour pass. And the largest hotel there was taken over by the Red Cross. There was plenty of room for them to stay. There wasn't too much to do. There were only two movie houses and one restaurant had a dance every Saturday. And then of course, they could go on the river Cam and punt. No boats were allowed with motors on, just you know a canoe or a thing like that. So, they used to be walking through town and our stable yard was in town. And they'd come to the stable yard. There were horses for hire and my father would greet them, "Hello, can I help you?" "We want to take a ride." And my father had one question he asked. No matter who it was if it was somebody he didn't know, he would say, "Have you ever been on a horse before?" Because we had some horses that needed to have a rider on it. And there was one guy

that came in sometimes six or seven or eight but some member of the family had to take them out because they didn't know how to get out of the town of Cambridge to get out into the countryside. So, we literally met up with hundreds of different G.I.s. It was a very interesting time in our lives. You know, but it was good.

**Q:** Growing up in post war England, what were your thoughts on Chamberlain and like the people there?

**JH:** Well, we always thought Chamberlain was a good MP... I can't even remember it (laugh). Well, he was a... Well anyhow, we always liked him. I was four when we went to England. I finished school when I was seventeen and worked for a couple of years. And then got involved with one of those G.I.s. We were happy with... To tell you the truth, we as kids or even growing up, we never knew much about what was going on. Of course, everything was rationed, I mean, clothes. But people who had, I want to say the normal people... I don't mean lords and ladies and everybody who had plenty of money. But those who had a car had to just leave them or get rid of them because the gas was rationed and people couldn't afford it. We rode bicycles. When my youngest brother was born they had seats that you sit behind them and babies that could sit up. Mother did all of the shopping with a basket in front of the bicycle, very different from the living you notice now over here too, you know. But it was good, it was good. And my sister went into the Navy, the wrens, the woman's navy. My brother, just younger than me, he was in the tank corp. And he was stationed in Italy, and he married an Italian girl and took her home. They said our family was like the League of Nations because we (laugh)... but it was fun. It was very good.

**Q:** What did your mother and father do during the war?

**JH:** My mother was a volunteer in the large hotel that was given to the Red Cross or the Red Cross took over. And it was G.I.s that stayed there. And she was in charge of the breakfast on Sundays. And she worked with a friend of hers, who had a small restaurant. And she would work with her. My father, of course, had the riding school. But during the war, he joined the... they used to have places where people would go and sit... And anytime a plane came over, they would report it to a headquarters. And he did that during the night. He would work during the night. When the sirens went off for a bomb attack coming, where ever the planes were coming from, there were several of these places. And the one that he worked with was like in the cellar of the Chamber of Commerce. It was a huge room. And they had a huge table with a map of the whole of England. They had to say, "Well, there's a bomb coming over and it's going northwest and it's going..." And they had to keep them... so that they knew where they were, you know. We had a siren going off almost anytime, I would say almost every day. But there weren't many bombs dropped on Cambridge, because we were surrounded by airfields. And of course, anti-aircraft groups around the airfields were taking care of them. And I only know of one person who was killed by a bomber and it was a teacher who taught second grade. She and her mother lived one block from the school. And there was one night where we had air raids and there were a couple of bombs dropped. And one bomb dropped right on her house and the two of them were killed. I mean, there were one or two others but really no real numbers from Cambridge. Although, as I say, theoretically, when we had an air raid siren, we were meant to go downstairs, or if you didn't have any... A lot of people had air raid things done in their yard. They'd dig a little and then

put corrugated metal roofs. And they'd have like bunks in there. The government also supplied tables made out of metal that you put underneath your table. If you had a square table and if there was an air raid and you had children and you didn't have anywhere to go outside, you would get under there. Because that would be like a steel protection. That's what we did.

**Q:** What was in your air raid shelter?

**JH:** Well, an air raid shelter... I mean, they did have, especially in London of course they had lots of them down there. But they were underground places. And in London everybody went to the train stations and they put up bunks in there. And people would sleep in there because you were underground. London was a very busy place. But they say that during the war... I think the train stopped running. The bunks and everything were made... whole families used to go down there and sit there with the children in the bunk and stay overnight. We knew that they were building those things. There were big air raids in some parts of the towns. As I say, they dug out. I don't know what they built, metal walls or what. The cover, the ceiling was usually corrugated, not corrugated carboard, but the metal roofs, you know. Anybody could go there. If you lived there, you'd go. But we didn't have anyone. We used to... Well, father was working. He wasn't there, and mother was busy. We just stayed in bed. We didn't really... and because we didn't have many bombs dropping in Cambridge, we were... There weren't too many that had them. It was different.

**Q:** Did you ever go to London during the war or did you stay in Cambridge?

**JH:** In 1944, I was asked... The firm that I worked for was Pye Radios, that was outside of Cambridge. And before the war they made radios for everything, cars. And they were just beginning to make the TVs but they hadn't started selling them yet. But then they started making radios for tanks or submarines or airplanes. They were doing all war work. And I worked there for some time. And then they said they had an office in London and they said they really needed someone to go and work in the office because the girls that worked there had evacuated. During the war they evacuated many families from the big towns and sent them to the smaller cities and found houses, families who would take them. So, mother had... Well, we had a house with plenty of room. But when I was asked if I wanted to go, I said yes. So, I went up to London and got accommodation right in the place near where I was going to work. There was a youth hostel for young girls who were going to live in London for the first time. And you could only stay there for two years because they figured if you'd be in London, and had a job and worked for two years, you could find somewhere else to live. But I didn't know how long I was going to be there. So, I got a job there. My bedroom was on the third floor. But every time there was an air raid warning, you had to go down to their cellar. And then when the all clear went, you'd go back to bed. Well, sometimes you'd do that three times a night. Because as the waves of bombers came over, another siren would go off. And when they had all cleared and there were no more, they'd give the all clear. But then another batch would come. So, another girl and I... I got tired. I said, "This is ridiculous getting up two or three times a night and having to go back upstairs." So, they had a small air raid shelter in their yard, and it had six bunks in there. I said to this girl, "I'm going to sleep down there." So, instead of going upstairs to our bedrooms, we slept there. We could hear the siren, and we could hear the bombs go. But that was the

beginning of what they call... I can't think of the word I want... But they had the first bombs at this time had motors on them. After the air raid siren would go, you'd often here this putt, putt, putt. And you knew that it was a bomb coming over. But all of a sudden, it would stop! And then it fell. And that was before they had the big ones now they have, I can't think of the word. I don't know what the thing is. I'm too old to remember those times. But that's how... I was only there for six months, because, well, I was going to get married. So, I went home and got married. I wanted to go back to the company I was in and I told them, I said, "I might have to leave without very much notice." They said, "Oh well, we don't want you here then." So, I got no job. My husband was in the 8<sup>th</sup> Airforce. He wasn't a flyer. He was a secretary. So he got all of the letter and information that came. He came in one day and said, "We just got a notice today that at the end of the war, the 8<sup>th</sup> Airforce is going to be sent to Germany in the Army of Occupation." He said, "If I'm in Germany in the Army of Occupation and I get leave, they won't give me leave to go from Germany to England to see you. They'll give me leave to go from Germany to the states were I'm from." So, he said, "The best thing to do is to get you there now." So, we went up to the embassy. I had my paperwork and because I had a Canadian birth certificate, I would be returning to the continent of my birth. And they issued me a non-cultural visa. Now for the thousands of other girls that had to wait until the end of the war... But they said, "Go home and pack your clothes and be... pack whatever you want to take with you, and be ready to leave in twenty-four hours' notice. So, we went there to Cambridge and I said to my mother, "I've got to pack everything because I have to be ready to leave in twenty-four hours' notice." She said, "All right then, pack." So, two days later, hadn't heard anything. And I said to my mother, "Would you wash the clothes that I'm wearing, because I have to be ready to leave and I would like to take them with me. Well, we didn't have a washing machine or anything. So, mother washed them by hand, you know. And, "Thank you." And two or three days later, I said, "Would you wash these?" After doing that for two weeks, she said to me, "Look, I am not going to spend the rest of my life washing your clothes. If you get the notice to go, and you've got dirty clothes, I either wear them dirty or pack them dirty or leave them here and I'll take care of them. They didn't send me any notice until six months later! So, it was just as well that she hadn't been washing all that time. I just sort of went about my business. Because the company that I had worked for in London, "If you're going to leave without giving us two weeks' notice, no, we don't want you." So, I worked with my father. When the G.I.s came to ride... It had been mostly my sister who would take them out. When I was there, I worked with my father. My husband was very fortunate. He used to get a pass to come in to Cambridge every night. So, after he'd finish his work in the office, he'd get on his bicycle and start riding the fourteen miles to Cambridge. And I would've been taking G.I.s or whoever else went riding. So, if I finished the night, I'd get on my bike and go and meet him. And then he'd ride and stay overnight and get up at four or five in the morning, and I'd give him breakfast. And then, I would ride my bicycle with him back to the... but I wasn't allowed on the base, because I was just a civilian. So, he'd say goodbye to me and he'd go on and he was there. And then I'd turn around and ride the fourteen miles back by myself. But that's what you did.

**Q:** How did you actually end up meeting your husband?

**JH:** Well, there were two G.I.s that came to ride one day. My father greeted them and

said to them his usual thing. They said we want to go for a ride. And so, he said, "Have you ever been on a horse before?" And one of the G.I.s said, "Sure, I have." He said, "We came from... I came from Iowa. I've had horses. So, my father said, "Okay, fine. My daughter will take you out." My sister took them out for a ride. And we used to ride. There were several different places that had horses for hire, but most people used to rent them out for an hour and pay by the hour. You want a ride, it'll cost you so much an hour. But my father wouldn't do that because what we found out is if anybody paid seven and six to ride for an hour, they'd go as far as they could in that hour, and then so they wouldn't have to pay extra if it took them longer to get back, they'd turn around and race the horses back so that they got back within the hour. My father used to charge seven and six for a ride. Sometimes, it was an hour and a half, sometimes depending how much trotting and cantering they did. My sister took those out and the next week they came again and she took them out again. And a third week they came and she took them out. They had finished riding and said hello and goodbye and they'd gone to go back to the field. My father came to me and said, "Look if those two G.I.s want to ride again, you make an appointment and you take them out. And for heaven sakes, teach that one to ride. He's ridden my horse three times. He still looks like a sack of potatoes tied in the middle, and I won't let him ride my horse again." He said, "It's a disgrace to my yard. So he said, "You take them out and teach him to ride." So, the next time they wanted to ride, I took them out. The streets in the older part of Cambridge were very narrow. You couldn't have horses. So, in town you rode in twos. When my sister took them out, she rode and had the one guy from Iowa ride with her, and the other guy just rode behind. Well, when I took them out, I had him riding beside me. I didn't know at the time, but he came from Jersey City. He had never seen a mounted horse except when the police patrolled the parks. Apparently, I was very strict with him, and I taught him to ride. They never came to ride again. But he started dating me, and I eventually married him. (Aww.) Yea. So, he taught me to drive his care when I'd been over here six years. And that was the hardest decision he ever had to make, to teach a woman to drive most precious possession, his car. Apparently, I taught him to ride. But we met many, many... We met literally hundreds of them. They were very nice. One man came and he was very nice guy. I took him out riding. And I was asking him where he was stationed. He was stationed in Basic Bourn (27:46 – 27:56 froze/no audio). Anyhow, when I came in that night I said, "I had one of your G.I.s riding today. And I took him out, and we had a nice ride." Two days later, he came to me and said, "I was talking to one of the G.I.s when we were having dinner," or something and he said, he told me, "You know, two days ago, I went into Cambridge and I went for a ride. And I had a wonderful time. It was a very nice girl that took me. And I'm going back there again." So, my husband said, "Was the girl a blonde or a brunette?" He said, "Oh, the girl was a blonde." My husband said, "The blonde is my wife." He said, "Oh! I didn't know that." He never came back again. There was nothing wrong. There's nothing much you can do when you're both on horses, you know what I mean. We laughed at those things. We met many, many lovely guys. We had a good time.

**Q:** When you were coming over to America after the six months you were told, how did you come over?

**JH:** We were told... We were called by the embassy in London, and told on a Saturday. They sent a cable. Because I was out riding with four or five G.I.s. My youngest brother

knew where we went riding, so he came on his bicycle, "Joan you got a cable! You gotta go! You gotta go!" That was Saturday afternoon. The cable said: Report to the embassy in London at nine o'clock on Monday morning, being prepared to pay your passage and sail. So, I packed up and everything, and we went up to London. We were told, "All right." My husband couldn't go. They sent me by train from London to South Hampton, which is in the south of England, because that's where the boat was. We got on board, but my husband wasn't allowed to come to the boat with me. So, he went back to Cambridge to say to my mother and father, "I've sent her on her way." Mother wasn't... They both liked him, but he said to me afterwards in a letter, "It was a little chilly about your father." Because somebody had once said to him, "Cap what are you going to do when your daughter leaves you?" He said, "What do you mean when my daughter leaves me?" He said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I heard she'd married a Yank." He said, "She did marry a Yank." And he said, "Oh, well I presumed that he would be going to the states." He said, "She married a Yank, but she'll never leave me." So, when the time actually came, see it was a little bit of a shock to him. We got on board ship and they pulled the boat from South Hampton and on the southern part of England, the southern coast there's the Isle of Wight. And we pulled in and put down our anchor. And we sat on that boat for five days before we moved. And when I was complaining to somebody, they said they were assembling the convoy. It was still wartime, and we came in convoy. And although our ship was a small ship, it was the John Ericsson. We were the largest ship in the convoy, but a convoy could only go the speed of the smaller ship. And occasionally we'd see the destroyers or whoever was guiding us or guarding us when we were coming over. But it took us twenty-three days to get here. And there were no seats on the boat, you know on the deck, very strict. We had... I was in a cabin with five other girls. It was three bunks (points three up high right/left). I got very friendly with one girl. So as I say, we used to walk around the deck. There was nowhere to sit down, but we used to sit on the deck underneath our porthole. And I always take my knitting where ever I go. I would sit there and I knitted myself a sweater while we coming on. My girlfriend sitting beside me said, "Wish I'd thought of bringing my knitting." She said, "You have anything I could do?" I said, "Yes, I've got more pins, and I've got plenty of yarn. I'm making myself a sweater." She made the sleeves for me. We sat there and talked. We got to know each other well. But again, when we had to ride whether we wanted to or not, we used to sing, my family, my brothers, and I. So I said, "Let's sing a song." We'd sing and we'd be sitting there and the G.I.s... There were wounded G.I.s on board. There were ninety brides, and three of them had babies with them. But there were many, many G.I.s who were bed ridden. We never, ever saw them. They were in the cabins below deck. There were quite a few and they were wounded. One man had lost one arm, but they were walking around and that. They had nowhere to sit down either. They'd come around and stand there. They eventually sit on the ground and we ended up having about thirty or forty them every day. We'd sit under out porthole and they'd sit down. And we'd sing and they'd sing with us and we'd taught them a couple of English songs, they taught us a couple of American songs, not the kind you'd sing in church or anything. We had fun and it made it interesting, because they would talk to us and we would talk to them. In spite of the fact it was twenty-three days, it was March. I got on board ship March the first, and March the twenty-third, we pulled into the New York harbor. And it was raining, and it was foggy, and it was cold. And all of the G.I.s said, "You wait until you see the New York skyline. It's the most beautiful skyline in the

whole world. Well, we really didn't care about the skyline (grimace). It was freezing. It was snowing. It was miserable. I said to the girls, "I wonder if they said to we girls now if you want to, you can go right around and go back home." I said, "I wonder how many would go." Cause I really thought... The thing is my husband had said, "You'll probably be put off at Elise Island." I was to go... His sister had written and had told him that she would like me to go and live with her, because I had nobody over here. I knew nobody. When she had written to the authorities, she said that she would provide a home for me. She had to do that, and she had to give them an estimate of her income, so that they'd know that she could afford to keep me and not throw me out of the house. The Red Cross in New York met the boat and took all the brides to the Red Cross headquarters and interviewed each one of us separately. When it was my turn, they said, "Where are you going?" I said, "Wood-Ridge, New Jersey." Have you made any plans to get there or is somebody going to meet you? How are you expecting to get there?" I said, "Well, my husband told me to go to the bus department and get a bus to Journal Square and then Journal Square change and get a bus that would go to Wood-Ridge which was about twelve miles from Journal Square." She said, "Well, you know exactly where you're going." I said, "Well, sort of." I said, "I only have English money. I don't have any American money." I don't know what they would do with it. But I said, "I'm going to live with my sister-in-law and her family. And I have a telephone number. And if we call her and if they're home, they'll come and meet us. So, the Red Cross lady called the number and said who she was and they said, "Oh, yes. We'll be there in about a half an hour." They let me say hello to her on the telephone. And I waited. After about a half an hour... Because a lot of the girls had to go... If they were going to California or anywhere else... I mean, they had to go by bus or by train. But I don't know what their circumstances were, whether they had money or somebody was going to meet them. But it was very easy for me. They came to meet me and took me home. They even brought my mother-in-law. She lived in Jersey City. So, on their way, they stopped and picked her up. And they had a five-year-old girl, daughter with them. And they picked her up and took me to Woodridge. I was there. It was very, very lovely. They were very, very kind. Of course, I was new and they showed me around. I can remember the first day when I got there. She showed me the house and where the bathroom was and she, "Anytime, all you want, go to the bathroom, we have showers and everything." Well, we didn't have showers in England. We had bathrooms but just with a bath, you know. I think it was the next day. I thought, I'd like to take a bath. But she had said to have a shower. And I thought, well that would be good. So, I walked into the bathroom. She had the most beautiful shower curtain. It was... I've never seen any since that was so pretty. When I got there I thought, "Oh, my goodness. I don't want to get this wet." So, I put it outside the bath and took a shower. Well, I didn't know all of the water was going outside the room. I mopped it up very quickly. It was silly things like that I didn't know, that I never met up with. She (laughing) She was very good to me. I actually got a job. Their neighbor was the manager of the telephone company. And I had always wanted to be a telephone operator. And she called me and asked me if I'd like a job and I had nothing to do. I used to help my sister-in-law, and I used to walk her little girl to school every morning. But nothing else really. After the one thing I made such a mess of, I don't think she really wanted me to help them out much. When the chief operator called me, she spoke to me quite a long time. And then she said, "Would you like to become a telephone operator? Do you have any questions?" I said, "The only thing is, I wonder if they would



understand me.” Because this was before dial. Everything had to be done by voice. So, she said, “I’m enjoying this conversation very much.” So anyway, she said, “Report.” So, for the first two weeks, they had one supervisor with two students. And for that first two weeks, the first day they made us get acquainted with the board where they had all of these lights and if any person picked up the telephone, a light would come on. So, you’d pick up this and plug in that light and say, “Number, please.” And then she’d tell you a number and you pick up the wire. She was in the back one and I was on this one and put in the number. I enjoyed that very much. It was good. When my husband came home six months later... his mother lived in Jersey City and that’s where he lived with her when he came into the army. So, of course we were going there. So, we moved to Jersey City. You had to learn how to pronounce that so everybody could understand me because that’s how everybody else was saying it. I transferred to the telephone company office in Journal Square. The first day that I... I used to work five in the evening till eleven o’clock at night or six to twelve. Because you got the same wage and even got a night differential that paid you a little more money. Because the young girls didn’t want to work at night. They wanted to be able to go for dates, but I couldn’t go out on any date. My husband was around. It was less time to be... when the children came around and he was working, it was easier because grandma was there. We moved into her apartment. But anyhow, the first day that I went there was a Sunday. They put me between two older operators. They knew I was new to the job. And so, I was going on fine and then I got a call. They wanted a call in Long Branch. So, I checked on my desk, and it told me Long Branch was a long-distance call, so you plugged into a long-distance jack. I said, “Long Branch.” And immediately I got tick, tock, tick, tock. That’s a recall. And that was the only audible one. But you had to release that within ten seconds because otherwise the supervisor would come. That’s when the customers were not happy with what was going on. So, I released and I thought, I must have taken the wrong jack. So, I checked again and no, it was still long distance. So, I plugged into the long-distance jack right beside it and I said, “Long Branch.” And again, I got a recall. “Oh dear, what am I going to do?” I released it immediately. But I thought if I say it the way I say it, I won’t get the number. And if I say it like the other say it, they’ll think I’m making fun of them. The operator beside me said, “Let me take this one for you, honey.” And she transferred it to her desk and she plugged into the same jack that I did and she said, “Long Braaaanch.” And got it right away. So, I said, “Thank you.” We weren’t allowed to talk, but I said, “Thank you.” I thought, what am I going to do if I get another call from Long Branch, because I’m sure she’ll think I’m making fun of her. But I got another call and I thought, well, if I expect to work here, I’ve got to be able to transfer the numbers to the places I want. So, I took the bull by the horns and I plugged in and I said, “Long Braaaanch” and got it right. I was very upset. I didn’t like the idea of doing that, you know. But it worked out.

**Q:** How was your life in America after the war and everything?

**JH:** I was very, very different. Different from the point of view... I mean... After my husband... My husband came home in ’45 and in ’46 or ’47 I had the first baby. And so, I was home. I didn’t work after that. When I was pregnant with the first one, I took a six month leave of absence from the telephone company. But I was in Jersey City by then, and had a six month leave, and then I went back to work. But again, I only worked six to twelve or five to eleven. So, Grana was there all day. And my husband work in Colgate’s for thirty five years and it was shift work. So, one week he would work eight to twelve,

and one week twelve to eight, and the other, days, evenings and nights. When I was at work, I was only gone for five or six hours. All except the time he'd work four to twelve, he would be there too. So, it wasn't any hardship to leave the baby with grandma, because my husband was there. I did that and I had three babies born after the first one. Then after the first one when he was born; we had another boy. And when he was eight we had another one and that was the end of it. Then we moved to the same town, Woodridge, that I had been in when I first came over there. And we actually got house on the same street that his sister lived. So,... When Grana heard we had bought that house she said, "Well, I'm not going to live out there in the sticks." She had three or four other elderly ladies and they used to meet once a week over to their houses and have lunch or go to a movie. We moved in May, and it happened to be a very hot summer. And the house that we bought was an older house. It had a screened in porch all across the front. So, she had said right from the time we moved, "I'm not going to live out there." Even if her daughter was four houses out on the same street. She said, "No, I'm not going to live there." But, that summer it was very hot. And she spent the whole time on the front porch. And all of the neighbors, of course, knew of me being there and coming back here with my husband and Grana. So, they would talk to her and after that, she never mentioned it again about going back to Jersey (/joy zee/) city where she lived. I used to take her to the bus, and sometimes I would go with her and they would let me... When he was a toddler, I'd take him too. After a while, she got old and didn't do that anymore. She was quite happy. She lived with use for twenty-six years. It was good. As I say, I worked for the telephone company. I didn't work after that. When you have two kids and grandma is getting older, we had our own house. We had a yard. We used to grow vegetables and do all kinds of things like that. It was very, very good. My husband... When he first came home, he took me back to England after about a year. I had three brothers and a sister. We went to visit all of them. And when we were at one of the gatherings one time, my husband said, "Look, if you would like to come and visit us in the states, please let me know, and I'll be happy to send you a ticket for your flight." And he asked my two brothers. Well, two of them; the others were away. One brother came with his wife and two kids. And my sister, she had separated from her husband. She had a couple of kids. My husband particularly wanted her to come, because he knew her when they first went riding. She used to take them out. He said, "Please, just let me know, Joan. And I'd be happy to send you a ticket to fly out." She said, "You darn GI's think you can buy anything just 'cause you have got money. I'll come to the states when I can pay my own way!" And she was a little bit like that. He didn't mean it at all like that. He just knew that really she didn't have money at home to pay for flights, you know, to come like that. She separated from her husband. I don't know what she was doing for work. It wasn't easy. But eventually she did come, but that was a long, long time later than that. It was good. I went back. He sent me back. The first time I went alone. He sent me and my oldest son, who was going to be two. And he said, "Would you like to take Darrell to show your parents?" Because they were getting older. He sent me and my son. The only... He couldn't get a return ticket until six months later. So, theoretically, I was going to be there. But when I was leaving he said, "Please, once you get settled and been there a couple of weeks, please get in touch with the shipping company and see if you can get a return ticket because I'm going to miss you." So, I got home on a Wednesday. And they still had ration cards. I had to go to the Chamber of Commerce and get a ration card for myself and my baby. While I was there, I called mother up

because I didn't... You could get ration cards and you could buy all food from any grocery store with the exception of meat. You had to register one butcher, because then he would know how much to get for how many people he had registered. And I forgot the name of who we'd registered with. So, I called her from the office where I was filling out forms and that. And she said, "Is everything all right?" And she told me the name of the butcher. And I says, "Is everything all right with Darrell?" Because I left him with her. And I said, "I don't know how he will behave." He didn't know her. We'd only been there one day. When I called, she said, "Well, he's doing all right. He's in the middle of the kitchen floor and he's taken out every pot and pan I have out of the cupboards. And he's enjoying playing drums with them." Anyway, this was a Wednesday, Thursday. And on Saturday, she came into the kitchen. She said, "I'm going to make this cake, because we have some people coming to meet you tomorrow." It was a fruit cake and she used every bit of fruit and stuff she had from her allotment to make this big cake. She didn't put it in the oven till about nine thirty or ten. She said, "I'm so tired, but I've got to wait for that and it'll be about an hour." I said, "Well, you can go to bed, and I'll look after the cake for you. She said, "All right, but check it now and it should be done." I said, "I'll check it well." My brother was there and I said, "And to check to see that's it's done, we may take a piece of it at eleven o'clock (or whenever it's coming out)." She said, "You're not going to eat it now! It's for tea tomorrow when we have these friends coming to meet you." So, we behaved ourselves and didn't do it. We had one very large bedroom in the house. And in it was a double bed. They had bought a crib for the baby. They knew we were going to be there for six months. Darrell woke up crying at two o'clock in the morning, Sunday morning. And I said, "I know he's wet. I'll change him. Mother said, "I'm awake. I'll change him." I said, "No, I will do it." So, I got up and change him and she said, "Well, I'm going to go to the bathroom anyway." So, I was dealing with him and getting him done. And she came from the bathroom and closed the bedroom door and took one step and the she tripped. I thought she tripped over the rug and fell and hit her head on the nigh table. And she was lying unconscious on the floor. So, I got the kid back in bed, and I couldn't move her. But through the other side of this very large bedroom wall was another little bedroom. And my youngest brother was sleeping there, so I woke him up and said, "Ben, please come and help me move the pan, because she fell and hit her head, and I can't move her." And dad in those times, he would sleep in the bedroom that overlooked the yard, because the grooms would come about five thirty or six. And he used to speak to them out of the bedroom window. And he would say, "I need such n' such horse for ten o'clock and the other three will be ready at three." But they had to go in and muck them out and groom the horses and clean the tack and get them ready for the hours that was needed. So, I got him and he helped me put mother to bed. And he called the ambulance. And they took her to the hospital. And the doctor said that he thought that maybe she had had a slight stroke or something. Years before... Now every member in the family rode. And my youngest brother was taught to ride before he was three. But of all the riding that had been done by my mother and father and four kids, the worst accident that ever happened was my mother... We were going down a slight slope in a field, and my mother's horse tripped and fell and she fell off. When the horse was getting up, he put is hoof on her forehead and it slipped right down the back, and she had a very bad scar from that. They said it might be a blood clot or something from that fall, but she died on a Wednesday. It was a little bit... It was a sad thing for me. That was it. I never did get in touch with the boat company. I couldn't do

that, because the day mother was buried, my son, who was with me, had his second birthday. My father developed pleurisy. I was in bed for a month, and I was his nurse. And looking after... I didn't do much with the horses then, because I had the kid and the rest of the family to look after. But, you know, it was good. (Thank you. Well, we are running out of tape.) Thank you very much. Once I get started, most people want to hear everything. It's interesting to them. I must say that when we were on board, there was one GI that almost lost his arm. He didn't want them to amputate it. He said to me, "Since I've been in service and have been abroad, my wife gave birth to our first baby. Could you make something with your knitting?" So, I made them a pair of baby booties, so he could take it. The only thing I knew about him is that he came from Scarsdale. I don't know his name or anything else. That's it.