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Ruth Jacobs

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WRIGHT BROTHERS - CHARLES F. KETTERING

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

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Editor: Kathy Kelto

RUTH JACOBS

Interviewed by

Susan Bennet

in

March

SB That's alright. I was...

M JJ That way they can take out what you want then.

SB Yes.

M JJ You just take out what you want.

SB Yes, they edit it.

M JJ Yes.

SB This is a tape, a tape on the Wright Brothers, and I'm talking with Mrs. Jim Jacobs Sr. And Mrs. Jacobs' husband was employed by the, was it the... (break in tape)

SB In here, in Dayton and she also knew the family quite well. Let's see, this was about, about what time, about 1915.

M JJ About 1915. See, I married him in 1915.

SB Yes.

M JJ And at that time, the Wright Company had just, I think the Wright Company was founded in 1908. And he was an employee out there. He had been before I went there. And he was in the wood-work department. Then he finally was made chief engineer and he collaborated with Mr. Wright and in all his, in his new wind tunnels down on Broadway?

SB Oh, yes.

M JJ And he, with his experiments and his, that he, that Mr. Wright did, he was with him for years, down there.

SB Yes. How was Mr. Wright as an employer?

M JJ Oh, he was just a wonderful person. Very quiet, and very unassuming and I think that perhaps, Wilbur the brother, from what my husband would say, was, told me, because he knew him well, he was a little bit more assertive. He was a business man, and Orville was more of the inventor.

SB Oh, is that so?

MJJ Yes.

SB That's very interesting. Did you ever, when, before we started, you talked about going out for, I think it was lunch, and going out. Where, oh out at Simms Station, you mean?

MJJ Yes, out at Simms Station. Out old Valley Pike and then there was a big red covered bridge there, we'd go over that red covered bridge. That isn't there anymore, of course. And just one big, just one big shed out there, a hangar, to house this big plane, which was of course, wasn't the first flight plane, it was a plane built about, just a little bit later than that. And that's the one they experimented on.

SB What kind of experiments did they do?

MJJ Well, they, I have a, a notebook here that my husband had and he and Orville would go up into the air, and they would put something on the airplane and to experiment with them, my husband had his notebook that this, this, this flap goes to one side. This and that. And then they would come down and they would rectify this mistake whatever it was. And then they would go up and try it again.

SB Didn't that scare you?

MJJ I have that notebook which is just, I wouldn't give anything for it.

SB Yes, didn't it frighten you to have your husband up there flying around?

MJJ It didn't exactly. I would go out with him many times, and my husband was really the mechanic on the machine at that time, and I know that he would, always had the life, because his, his pockets were just bulging with things, screw drivers and pliers and string, and just everything. Everything to make amends for something that wasn't right.

SB Wouldn't that be in the engine or something in the way of the...

MJJ It could be, it could be in the, it could be in the lift of the wing of the

or any little thing. At that time the engine was propelled sort of like a bicycle is propelled. With a chain, like a bicycle chain. And, and they sat on the seat, just like a bicycle seat. And then, of course, they had a little, they had a broomstick in front there, to put their feet on. And they just circled around.

SB Mr. Wright did fly with him then?

MJJ Oh, yes. My husband never flew a plane by himself.

SB Oh, is that right.

MJJ No, he went with him.

SB Yes. Did it ever seem to hurt Mr. Wright, because of his injury? Did he ever talk about that?

MJJ About that he, that he was injured...Fort Myers, you mean?

SB Well, yes.

MJJ You know he was injured badly at Fort Myers, when they made that demonstration there. And that was before the government had just given them, that was in 1908 and the government had, they had that time they recognized and offered them, offered them I think twenty-five thousand dollars for a plane to be delivered in a hundred days. And it was delivered at that time, and that was our first plane, for our defense, aerial defense, one plane, that was all. And he was injured there and he went to the Mayo Brothers and everything with this injury and it seems if, operation he could not have an operation for it and so my husband would come home a lot of times and he'd say, well, Orville has had a terrible time today, and we had to lay him on the table and stretch his legs, he was in terrible pain. So that pain would come and go. But he always felt it. It was always there.

SB It was always there and yet he still would go on and fly.

MJJ He still would go on and when his brother's death so unexpected and they had tried so hard to see the government, the American government would not

recognize the Wright Brothers, the Wrights. They, they even went to Paris to get recognition, for the first official recognition and they had to send their plane, you know, to England in 1928 and it was there until 1948, that Orville had passed away and Wilbur had passed away. So they never saw the plane come back. You know how it is, and so a prophet in your own city is not recognized.

SB What would you take out for them to eat? Do you remember?

MJJ Oh, I would just take cookies and pies anything I had. Anything I had they consumed.

SB Was Orville a fussy eater?

MJJ I know he wasn't when he was hungry, but he might have been a little bit picky other times. (laughter) But he was just so unassuming for things that were said and done. He was just so much like everybody else that you didn't think anything of it, see.

SB Oh, I see.

MJJ A few little things would come up, that you would remember, and then again he was just, to me he was just an ordinary being, this was the way he wanted to be. That was the way, he, just that was, just the way he wanted to be, unassuming.

SB Did you ever take any of the children out with you?

MJJ Well, the children were small then, see. They all knew, they all knew Mr. Wright. And when he'd come to our home it would be quite an occasion. And, and he would come up and then he would consult with Jim, and Jim said that when the brothers were together, they didn't always just see eye to eye. Why they wouldn't quarrel about it. One would say 'tis, and the other would say 'tisn't, and that way they would try to get their argument through.

SB Were you living in this home when they came?

MJJ I was living, living right over there, on Bryn Mawr, the second house there.

SB Right there? Yes.

MJJ Yes, the second house there.

SB And he'd come over?

MJJ Oh, yes. He'd come over and, and, and they would talk and oh, he was just a very, very nice person, just a very, very nice person. I never thought of him, a man has to be the common noted man before anything that you do in the early days that you will remember. You know what I mean.

SB Yes, on other words you didn't, did you have a special dinner for him? Or anything like that.

MJJ No, I never had a special dinner for him. Sometimes I'd have something and he would come in and sit down and eat something. But I never just had a special dinner for him. He would just come and go.

SB I see. Did they have any other topics that they talked about?

MJJ I think the air... I think that, I think that they were quite engrossed in the wind tunnel down there. They were quite engrossed with that. And then he did build a new wind tunnel in 1903. The first wind tunnel that was ever built he built in his bicycle shop, you know. And then he built the new one in the laboratory on Broadway. And then you know that plane, after that first flight at Kitty Hawk it was damaged by wind, and they had to crate it and bring it back and then it laid in the bicycle shop and it was even damaged in 1913 by the waters of the flood. And they, they moved it over to a barn on 15 North Broadway which was later torn down and he built his laboratory there. Then they took it out to the Wright Company and overhauled it and then they sent it out on exhibitions. The first one was in Massachusetts at the technical plane there, and then the second one in Dayton and then the third one was at the New York Aerial Show. And he wouldn't send anybody but my husband as the custodian of the plane. He

crated it and set it up and crated it and saw that it got home safely every time.

SB Do you think he was fond of the plane?

MJJ What?

SB Do you think he was fond of the plane?

MJJ Oh, very fond. You know they sent it to England, January 28, 19..., January 20, 1928, and it was my husband's birthday, and it wasn't a very nice birthday for him. And only three people got that plane ready for England. And that was Mr. Wright, Orville, I always called him Orville, Orville and Miss Beck, she was his secretary for a good many years, and Jim. They had to recover most of it with that, linen you know, they called linen the pride of the west, not linen, muslin, the pride of the west, muslin and they had gotten the first muslin that they had used on the plane, they had gotten from Rike-Kumler company, but the Rike-Kumler company wasn't able to get it at this time, so they had to send...

SB Wait, I want, it sounds like we're getting some noise, and I just wanted, push it away. I'm sorry but...

MJJ That's okay.

SB ...to bother you here.

MJJ But, but they had to send away to get it, to the mill company to get this, and they got, they had a hundred and twenty-five yards of this muslin and Orville cut the muslin out to fit the wings and Miss Beck sewed the muslin and my husband applied it, you know put it on the parts that it was needed. Where it was needed.

SB Do you remember what he said when he came home that night?

MJJ Well, he was just mad, he was, he was (laughing), you know, he was just out of fix, and it just seemed, you see. Anyway, when the Wright Brothers, they weren't rich, you know they were not rich people. And they had to, it

was so hard for them to get money to go ahead. And they even wrote to our government and said that they would sell our patents to our government and our government said they didn't have any time for a couple of Ohio cranks, that they just couldn't, you know. They couldn't put up with it. But then they went to Paris finally, and then finally they went to, they wanted to sell out in Paris and they went to Germany and to England but then in 1908 they got this, the government finally gave them this break of this plane. And then after this, Wright Company was built. Then they started to have their, give flying lessons by mail. All over the country and then things just commenced to whoop up with them just real good, just it seems that there was a turn, and everything, and the men after they came back from Paris, the Dayton people especially were so hard, they were so antagonistic against them and like one Dayton man said if anybody ever gets a heavier than air airplane to go in the air, any one who gets a heavier than air plane to fly, it won't be anybody from Dayton that'll invent it, see?

SB (laughter)

MJJ So they were just. Even when they moved the plane, they moved it at night, because they were ashamed of people to see them. They were just against those odds so that it wasn't very nice, you know. And then finally when, when the people finally knew that like at Kitty Hawk, there were only eight spectators there at their first flight. And there were twenty-four editors that the story was sent to and only five printed it, and that wasn't the Dayton editor.

SB Do you think by 1915 people had finally realized that they had...

MJJ They were commencing to. They were commencing to know that the Wright brothers were doing something then. I believe. I think they had more, more help and I think that people, that Brewer in England became quite interested in them, and I don't know how many trips, (laughter) trips he

came over to very, very good friends of the family, you know. And, and...

SB Did people ask your husband why he was working for those nuts? Or anything like that?

MJJ Oh, yes, he had. They thought that, but at that time when they in 1915, things were settled down a whole lot more, see. A whole lot better. You see the people were beginning to accept the fact that they really did invent something.

SB You didn't have to worry that the company was solvent or anything like that?

MJJ No, no. And then you know during 1918, during the World War, of course, they established themselves over there at South Field and they put out plane after plane. And during that time they were inventing, and all the time, you know...

SB Improving...

MJJ Improving, and improving. Aviation in its infancy was really not very much more than just a few gadgets. And then when they started to make their plane they couldn't, they found out they wanted the motor, their gliders, they tried their glider in Kitty Hawk and, and it was not a success. And Wilbur said at the time, of course this is what I hear from my husband telling, he said that man won't fly for a thousand years. And they were very muchly disappointed so many times, but that was just a stepping stone that they had the initiative to go on. They just burned the midnight oil and did without things and got along...

SB How, how many hours did your husband work a day?

MJJ Oh, just, I don't know. That's a pretty good long while. Sometimes he would work long, sometimes...I just couldn't tell you that. I just don't know.

SB He left in the morning and came home...

MJJ You see, he's been gone for twenty-five years, my husband has.

SB It's a long time.

MJJ Yes, but he liked Mr. Wright, or Orville very much and Orville trusted him with anything that he wanted done. And...

SB It seems like he didn't trust too many people.

MJJ No, he didn't. He was a little bit, Orville in his quiet way, was friendly but like you say, too many people he wouldn't take into his confidence, I don't think.

SB He didn't enjoy the crowd.

MJJ No, he didn't. Like over there in Paris, they called him King, "King of the Air", and he said, they called them "Kings of the Air", and he said, Orville said he'd rather just be called a United States citizen. That explains their attitude and how they worked. And then, you know they did finally have such a homecoming for them in Dayton, finally then, and I have a description of that in that what-you-call-it, that if you want it I, I can get, I don't like to give that out because I'm using it for something else on your taperecorder, but if there's any facts you want to know, I can get them out of there.

SB Yes, I see. Well, of course, I'm interested mainly in, you know, your personal recollections and your personal impressions.

MJJ Oh, another thing then about the personal impressions, you know they took, they were trying to fix the plane into a hydroplane, and they had the runners on them, they just look like sledders, I had pictures of, lot of pictures in there of those olden times. And they took them down to the Miami Shores, to experiment with them, Jim and Orville, and Charlie Taylor, you know of him, he was, he's one of the old ones too, you know. I guess he's passed away hasn't he?

SB Yes.

MJJ And they had a, the plane went into the river...

SB When they were flying it?

MJJ When they were flying, went down into the river. And when Jim, got out and looked and all he could see was Orville's, the bottom of Orville's boot sticking out of the water. And he called to him, he says are you all right, Orville? And that was the biggest joke, Orville just used to laugh about that, and tell everybody about Jim saying are you all right Orville, just his boots was sticking out.

(laughter)

SB Oh, dear, I, I would think it's pretty thrilling...

MJJ Yes.

SB ...a lot of those old planes, they look so fragile.

MJJ ...and out there in that, that field that they had that hangar on, the man that let them have the field, was somehow free of charge. But he cautioned them not to come down as they fly, if they fly when they come down be careful not to kill any of his cows out there. (laughter)

SB (laughter)

MJJ That was a, I think, I don't remember whether his name was Huffman or what it was.

SB Yes, Mr. Huffman.

MJJ He was the president of the bank, one of the banks here in Dayton.

SB Yes, with the help of his son.

MJJ Yes.

SB And, did they ever discuss anything else at dinnertime, did they ever discuss politics or...

MJJ No, No I never heard them,not once.

SB Yes.

MJJ Not once.

SB He just wasn't interested.

JJ No, I don't think he was. You know, I imagine the way he was inventing, and the things he had to do, I imagine they took up his mind real, I think that's all he was interested in, in a way. Or course he was interested in living and other things like that. But what I mean that was his chief topic.

SB Yes, did he ever discuss any lady friends?

MJJ Never, never, never.

SB How was he with the children?

MJJ With my children?

SB Yes.

MJJ Oh, they just loved him, they just loved him. He was just the nicest kind of person, had the nicest way with them.

SB Is that. When you say he had a nice way, what, did he play with them? Or...

MJJ Not exactly. He just had a real kind voice. Just a real nice way about him. That they all remember. And I know Wilbur remembers. Well, you can't get that big.

SB He's curious about it, what's that funny gadget?

MJJ Yes.

SB But, I guess kids are always that way.

(laughter)

MJJ Yes. So I just feel a great privilege, privilege that I can see all that going on, and all those I...

SB I would think so.

MJJ ... things going on really when, when aviation was just starting.

SB When he would come for dinner, would he stay a while? Did he ever bring you a box of candy?

MJJ Oh, yes. He...

SB Did he participate in any way?

MJJ He would bring the children some things, some times. And he, in his way, he wasn't lavish in anything in anything, you know what I mean. He was

quiet, unassuming. You might say he was real bashful.

SB Bashful, even with the kids?

MJJ Even with the kids. Real bashful.

SB Would he ever bring them toys?

MJJ No, no. He never did. He gave, he'd give them money, give them half dollars, and quarters and things like that, and tell them that he wanted to treat them, that they was such nice children, of course they was told to be on good behavior.

(laughter)

MJJ You know very, very good...

(laughter)

SB I can imagine that. They, they had an awareness that he was sort of an authority...

MJJ Yes, yes.

SB Somebody special, I imagine. Kids usually catch that from adults.

MJJ Yes.

(laughter)

SB Was there any particular child that he had singled out or?

MJJ No, no, of course two of my boys were named after, Jim's name is Wilbur, James Wilbur. And then when he went into the Navy he had to take his first name, and then I have Orville.

SB Oh, I see.

MJJ Orville, and I have five boys. I have an Orville, and a Wilbur.

SB Well, that's nice. That's nice, did it please him, I imagine it did.

MJJ Oh, yes, yes he was real, real, thought that was real nice.

SB I imagine that. Did you know any of, any of the rest of the family?

MJJ Oh, I knew his sister. I knew his sister, but I never, oh, oh, and then his brother Lorin, his oldest brother. You know he used to have a toy factory

down on Front Street downtown. He manufactured toy airplanes. And my husband, after Orville passed away, why my husband made these toy airplanes, invented them, and he had them, and Orville, or Lorin had the shop, and, and they manufactured them. And my husband got royalties from those things.

SB Oh, is that so?

MJJ And...

SB Now this was after Orville died? After 1948?

MJJ That was after Orville died, yes.

SB Oh, is that so?

MJJ And then Gus Wright, that's Lorin's son, he has moved out in the country. He's interested in horticulture, in putting different seeds, in different plants and different flowers. I talked to him not very long ago, and he said that he had, was putting two kinds together. He had gotten an iris that would grow outdoors in the winter as well as in the summer. So he's interested in that kind of stuff, see?

SB Yes, now they were, they were in the toy manufacture business, about how long?

MJJ Well, from 194...oh, I just don't know the dates. Maybe ten, twelve years.

SB Oh, is that so?

MJJ My husband died while they were still working on his toys down there. Well, Lorin got out of the business, and I sold my husband's patents then to Mr. Reager, and he ran it for a while see. And while Mr. Reager was down there, why my husband would still go down and see him. And while Mr. Reager was down there why my husband would still go down, but he passed away, and I think it was 1942, and he got so he couldn't go down to the shop.

SB Oh, I see. Did Orville ever mention religion?

MJJ No.

SB He never did.

MJJ No, no.

SB Do you know, did he ever go to church? Do you remember when he'd come for Sunday dinner.

MJJ No, not to my knowledge, he didn't.

SB Yes.

MJJ I don't ever really know what church he belonged to.

SB Yes.

MJJ You see, he just didn't.

SB He didn't talk about himself, did he?

MJJ No, no, no.

SB Extremely reticent. I have trouble finding that, and since his father was a bishop in, and he was raised...

MJJ Yes.

SB ...in...

MJJ Yes, he was a Methodist...

SB. ...in church...

MJJ Bishop his father was.

SB That, I've been trying to ground out, because...

MJJ It's hard to get all the details, you know. Even with me, because at that time, I didn't think anything of him, see.

SB Yes.

MJJ ...it was just routine.

SB Yes, he was just there.

MJJ It's been a good many years ago. To many he was just there and he was there, and my husband and he were friends.

SB How many, about how many people were employed, do you remember? Who else worked for Mr. Wright at this time?

MJJ You mean down at the...

SB Yes.

MJJ Oh, oh why there was Frank Whipp, and oh, Patsy get off of there, get the sack over on the...

SB That's okay.

MJJ Back...

SB Don't worry about it.

MJJ Oh, I have some pictures that I could show you, that I could tell you more.

SB I just wondered about more, about the number of people, was it ten, or twenty, or...

MJJ Oh, about that if the Wright Company made a little more, and, and you see all of the parts of the plane were made of wood then. And that all had to be covered with cloth and the cloth had to be treated.

SB Yes.

MJJ And, I was going to say that when they wanted to fly their planes, they couldn't get an engine of the right, of the right weight and horsepower, so they built their own engine. They built two engines, and they gave, Orville gave Jim one of these engines, and that's in the Smithsonian Institute, the second Wright engine is there. And my picture, at the Smithsonian Institute had my pictures and they, they took them off, or what ever you call it, and sent my original pictures back, they said they wouldn't take them for anything because they're priceless.

SB Yes.

MJJ And, in those pictures it shows the old Wright Company, the Wright Company out there, I always call it the Old Wright Company, and one special picture that's very interesting, is a lady at the sewing machine, she's sewing up this cloth. And do you know what she's dressed in? She's got a great big spool on the machine, about this big, and about this high, and then she's got her hair up, piled up way high, and big, you can see her long

dress down underneath the machine, you know. Very interesting.

SB Yes, that would be.

MJJ And then down there at South Field, during the war, in 1918, in 1918 they just made, in 1918 I think they had set their one thousandth ship over to France. And their production was very rapid down there, for then, you know.

SB Yes.

MJJ And then the planes, of course were different than they are now. Then in 1918, the, I guess they wouldn't want to even ride in one of them now, anymore, I don't know.

SB The advances are amazing. Just from that 1903 plane, to the 1918.

MJJ Yes, yes. It, it was very, very, fast.

SB How, how...

MJJ You, know Kettering was down there too. Kettering and Deeds, and Orville. Jim was chief engineer down there, and they, they sent Jim all over too, all over the country where ever they wanted to get their wood from, for the planes too. They sent him to buy the wood, and ship it home. And he was quite a man in the woodwork, see, too.

SB Looking for the ash I guess it was what they used. Do you re...

MJJ Yes, they used balsa quite a bit...

SB Yes.

MJJ Balsa wood, that was a very, very light wood. And then the propellers you know they were made of ash I think.

SB Do you ever remember when, any instance when he got mad? Orville?

MJJ Orville?

SB ...got mad?

MJJ Never, I never knew him. My husband, I don't think ever knew him to be angry. Like I said, he said that he and Wilbur would sort of bicker around a little bit, but all they do was one say 'tis, and the other 'tisn't, I

don't think Orville I, I don't think he ever got mad. At least he didn't in front of anybody, you know.

SB Did he ever speak out af any opinions on other subjects that he felt deeply about?

MJJ No.

SB Other than the plane.

MJJ He was very, like I did say, he was almost a meek man.

SB That seems...

MJJ Now, Patsy, now Patsy, she's just into everything.

(laughter)

SB She's just into everything.

SB Yes, she just wants to know what I'm doing.

MJJ Patsy.

SB There's nothing.

MJJ We didn't bring you anything.

SB There really is nothing in there...

(laughter)

SB ...that would interest you Patsy, I'm afraid. What did he, did he drive his own car at the time?

MJJ Yes, now we had his old car. He gave, gave Jim his old car, and in that car, it was an Oldsmobile, and he had special springs and things in that car on account of his back, you know.

SB Yes.

MJJ And the body was copper of it.

SB Copper?

MJJ Yes, and I had that out there in my garage which has been torn down, and I had that for years, and years, and years. And it was pretty much dilapidated and I did sell that. I sold it to a man in, I don't know

where he is from now. He came from one of the other states, and I just let him have it. But it was an old Oldsmobile was what it was. And it had a top that you could put up or down, and it had those old, real old fashioned lights in front, you know? That you light.

SB (laughter) He seemed to have liked automobiles.

MJJ And you know those struts that they put on the wings of the airplane, to keep them apart, I don't know whether you know what I mean or not.

SB Yes.

MJJ They're just struts.

SB I know what you mean.

MJJ And we just had, I just had struts at home, just all I wanted, and I'd, oh, when I lived over, lived over there, I had a tomato garden in the back and I just used the old struts to tie up my tomatoes with, you know. And now somebody would like to have those.

(laughter)

SB Yes, I bet they were good tomato stakes.

MJJ Yes, they were good tomatoes.

SB Isn't that interesting? He was a nice man to work for.

MJJ Oh, yes. Very particular though. Very precise. My husband...

SB Very precise.

MJJ ...was precise too in everything he did. Just precise. My husband was born and raised over near Yellow Springs. He did go to Antioch College for three years. He didn't finish the fourth year. But my husband was just a born mechanic. And every one of the boys are electrical engineers.

SB Is that so? Isn't that interesting? And I guess that...

MJJ My one in, one in California has gotten, went out to UD and got his degree, went to California and got one, went to Denver and got one. He's got, oh I, he's just got about the highest he can go. They're all of them

in on that, inclined like their father.

(break in tape)

(end of side one)

(start of side two)

MJJ And they're all, all of them in on that, inclined like their father.

SB Mechanic. Mechanic ability.

MJJ Mechanics.

SB Well, I can see why, I can see why...

MJJ When they was young, they'd have a sled and they break it, why Daddy wouldn't fix it. Well, now if you draw me a diagram of it, how's it is to be done, I'll do it, see. See, he taught them right then when they were little and they just fell into it, I think. And they're all good mechanics, every one of them.

SB Wonderful. Everyone of them.

MJJ And electrical engineers, mechanics too.

SB That's a marvelous ability, for a man to have.

MJJ Yes, I think so to.

SB Or any one to have.

MJJ Yes.

SB As a matter of fact as a housewife, I wished I had a little bit more. So many machines I have to, I have to run and take care of.

MJJ Yes, well, it's nice even for women to know, to be some mechanical. Now, my husband taught me a lot of things to do see. That comes in real handy, real, real handy.

SB Yes, I imagine it does. Who are Mr. Orville's friends?

~~JJ~~ Who were Mr. Orville's friends that would share his interests, did he speak of any one or do you know of anyone?

MJ ~~SB~~ The only one that I ever heard him speak or you know, talk, bring into the

conversation, was a Dr. Brewer from England. He seemed to be one of his very, very, very good friends.

SB Well, did he make any correspondence with him or?

MJJ They did for years. I don't know how many trips Brewer made over here to visit them. They were real, real close.

SB Now, that name doesn't mean anything to me.

MJJ It doesn't?

SB No.

MJJ Well, it means a good bit in aviation because he, he widened some of the ways for the Wright brothers to get ahead. In just exactly how and how much I don't know. But I just don't know. I just know what I've seen and heard and what's done into my life here, see.

SB Well, the first thing I'll have to follow that up.

MJJ Yes.

SB It sounds very, very helpful.

MJJ But if you go to the library, you will find in some of those books, on aviation that you will find, I think there's one book I think he wrote a book, If I'm not mistaken now, you can find out about it, but I'm almost sure he wrote a book.

SB Okay, well, I'll look it up.

MJJ Yes, if he didn't, there's some books there that's got all, everything in. But he opened up channels for them and, and oh, who was president then?

SB Well, Taft was the president who gave them the medal. And of course President Roosevelt.

MJJ Well, one of them worked so hard for them. I don't which one of them it was, that, like I say in those things, that was back before that I knew so much about it, see? But of course the flight and everything like that, that's all absorbed that all from written phamphlets, you know?

SB Yes. Did he talk about those early days or what did he say about Wilbur? I was particularly interested in that.

MJJ The brothers you know were very, very close. And he was just broken-hearted. And he went on with his work because he felt that they had both tried to be recognized and he thought that he should go on and give them the recognition that they both deserved.

SB Yes, do you think that his loss of Wilbur had some influence on him, then?

MJJ I think that it gave him more determination.

SB Oh, I see.

MJJ I think that he felt that, that, I think he carried a torch for his brother more or less. In the things that they had tried to do and the fact that the brother had not, could live to see what would become of it and then Orville, his plane in England and he had to die before it was brought back. But the Smithsonian Institute wrote him a letter of apology which he did accept but he never saw the plane come back.

SB Yes. Do you think that he regretted this very much?

MJJ Oh, yes.

SB Okay.

MJJ I think that was deep in his heart, I think that as far as the people, the Dayton people were concerned, I still have it in my heart against them. I just can't, I just lived with it, and I just heard it , and I just, I just feel that, that even now when they put on so much about him, I feel that well, he's gone and he don't know. Of course, he came to fame and to riches before he died. Of course. But you see, he never gave up his work. He built that laboratory down there and they would work on that, on that wind tunnel, and they would experiment with things, and you know. those little toy planes that of course they had to use in that.

SB In the wind tunnel? But you felt that he felt a resentment towards...

MJJ Oh, yes. Well you know, I don't think he would be human if he didn't. I don't think that, you know, human person is, we're not perfect and you know we do have some of those feelings which we should try, they tell you to try and not to and still there are some things that do rankle in your heart that you feel that, that it's unjust.

SB Not only to the Dayton people but to, to the military also.

MJJ To the military and the government.

SB And the government. He still felt that at the time that your husband was working for him, that they had not recognized. Do you think that he ever worried about the plane being used for war purposes, did he ever express himself on this? The fact that the plane...

MJJ Well, he knew it was going to be in 1918. He knew because, because they were manufacturing, all I don't think he, I don't think he regretted it at all. I don't think. I don't think at the time that they were working on it. That they had any idea about war. I think, of course when they came into the government they knew what the government would use it for, see. But I think that they had no objection to it. But when they first started on that plane, you know, they first started flying kites when they were grown men and people in Dayton thought they were a couple of nuts, flying kites, you know. And they had to live that down. And then they started to make this ungainly looking thing, without, without the engines that could glide, and then when they started to put the heavy engine on it, why everybody thought impossible.

SB Yes.

MJJ Impossible. But see they had that all to combat. They didn't, they didn't let it. They, were determined enough that they didn't, they were resourceful enough that they didn't let that deter them. In their dream. It really was their dream.

SB Did he ever express exactly why he wanted to fly?

MJJ No, not that I heard him. No.

SB Or to your husband, do you think he ever did?

MJJ Well, he might have, of course my husband was with him almost continually, and all those years. And of course, he knew him better than I did. But all the time that my husband was with him, I never heard him say, well, Orville he ought to do this, he ought to do that, I don't like this that he's doing, and I don't like that that he's doing, and he was my husband was very, very what would you call it? He wasn't religious or straight edged, but he was very, I can't, you know what I mean?

SB He wanted things exact?

MJJ He was very exact. Very.

SB Now, you're talking about your husband? Or Orville?

MJJ I'm talking about my husband. That I never heard him criticize Orville one time.

SB My.

MJJ Never heard him say.

SB Amazing.

MJJ I've never heard him come home, home, and hear him say, I wonder why Orville don't do this? I wonder why he don't do that. He might say something about the shop, somebody in the shop. But never about Orville.

SB They must...

MJJ He was very proud that Orville trusted him, that was his pride, see. He was very devoted to him.

SB He sounds devoted to him. He just have been devoted to him as a man as well as in mind.

MJJ Yes, because he knew him well.

SB Well, he was fortunate to have your husband work for him. I would say.

MJJ Yes, yes.

SB There are few...

MJJ My husband passed away before Orville did, you know, and, and...

SB Did he come to the funeral?

MJJ Oh, yes.

SB He must have felt a great loss.

MJJ Oh, yes.

SB Did he express it to you?

MJJ Oh, yes.

SB Well, that's nice. That he did. Could he express an emotion that way? I mean could he tell you that he had missed your husnand, that he felt a loss?

MJJ I think something that he had dealt with and had been with for a long time he could. I don't think that he would come to me and express himself on something that was going past, like an election like you say, or something like that. I don't think he would express himself, but I think he would on something that was, I think my husband was vital to him too, see. Because they worked together.

SB Do you remember what he said?

MJJ No, I don't. I don't remember what he said.

SB But he was...

MJJ He always sends, sends such beautiful Christmas cards every year, Orville did. And he didn't send them to everybody. Just a couple people and he wouldn't get a, like we do now, get a box of Christmas cards and send them. It would be maybe four of five people that he'd send Christmans cards to. And pick out an appropriate one, you know, for who he wanted to send it to.

SB It seems like he would be very, very seldom make an effort to engratiate

himself to people.

MJJ No, he wouldn't. Orville wouldn't let you get right in next to him either. You know what I mean.

SB Yes, I know what you mean.

MJJ I didn't feel, I felt that I knew him and everything else, but I didn't feel like I was a confidante of him, and that I was a real pal to him. I didn't feel that way. I don't think, but I think my husband did.

SB Yes, that he, there would seem to be few people that he did confide in.

MJJ Yes, that's right.

SB That's right. Perhaps. Do you think that that was his nature, or do you think that was his bringing up?

MJJ Well, his father was a very, very, he went out to everybody, I think, his father did. I think his father, I don't know about his mother. But I think that his father was a Bishop and I think he tried to reach the people quite a bit. But I don't think, I think they were brought up pretty strictly, I know they were. In a strict atmosphere.

SB Was his father an out-going person? I mean was he...

MJJ Yes.

SB More of a...

MJJ Of course I never knew his father but I've taken it for granted that he was. But I always pictured his mother as being real shy, but I don't know whether she was or not.

SB Of course she died fairly early.

MJJ Yes.

SB He was not too old. He seemed to have been so reticent, with people, and I just, I wondered why. Whether that was his nature or whether that was strict...

MJJ Well, don't you think people's nature comes in a good bit in the way

they're raised, their environment?

SB Yes, oh yes.

MJJ A good bit the way you are?

SB And then, then people I think in that generation were more reticent, I mean they didn't talk about things like we talk about things.

MJJ No, and they didn't have so many things to talk about for one thing. (laughter)

SB Yes, that might have made a difference too. They didn't discuss things as freely. Did he ever mention any other friends that he...?

MJJ No, not that I can remember. They had a friend that there was a, I don't know whether you ever heard him mentioned or not, have you ever heard of a Van Rennis(?) ? He, he, he's the one that worked on the first, on the first radios, now then Rennis(?) and, and my husband they made, made a, one of the first radios, the little crystal sets you know? And they worked on that. Well, now Van Rennis, knew the Wrights too. But whether he was friendly with them or not, I don't know.

SB I was thinking of Dayton people, that...

MJJ Well,I think he was friendly with, in a way yes, friendly as he was with anybody with the Deeds and the Ketterings, I think that you see the Ketterings were out there at that South Field, Kettering Field they called it. And I think that oh, do you know, do you know, do you know what year that laboratory was built?

SB Oh, his laboratory?

MJJ Down here, would remember, was it 1920?

SB I would say it was 1915.

MJJ In 1915.

SB Yes, and then there was one on Ludlow that Kettering had in 1917, but I think Mr. Wright...

MJJ Maybe I'm thinking here on Ludlow. 1915.

SB Well, the one on Ludlow was later.

MJJ Oh, it was.

SB Now Mr. Wright, Mr. Wright's laboratory, I think he established his laboratory when he sold out his interests in 1916. And then in 1917 when he went to work as an advisor on the Kettering bomb, the Dayton-Wright Company, I think then, but he still...

MJJ Now, the Wright Company, and the Dayton-Wright Company, are too different companies.

SB Yes.

MJJ The old Wright company is out was out west here, way out west here, towards Soldiers Home.

SB Yes.

MJJ And that little low long building.

SB Yes. The Dayton-Wright Company was to build a plane for war planes. But he had sold out. How, how did he feel towards all the Easterners and the distinguished people that came to see him, did he ever mention that, any of them?

MJJ No, I think that he never mentioned it, that he resented them, I think that he, I think that he took it into his stride, when he became really famous, you know. In a quiet way. I think whatever he thought about them he kept to himself. Whether he liked them or not I don't know. But you see, he didn't express himself. He didn't say, Oh, I don't know. You know, like people are like I would. I would say, well I just don't agree with this, or that, and I just, he kept it to himself.

SB Yes. Was he a nice guest to have in the house?

MJJ Oh, yes. He was nice, very quiet, with his banquets they gave him and everything, why he didn't get up and talk and make speeches, or anything,

he took them quietly as I must say. A lot of people wouldn't, you know.

SB Yes. He held...

MJJ He held these feelings in. I really think he was dignified as much as anything.

SB That's too bad that he didn't tell. Oh, that he felt the resentment, against the Smithsonian and against the homefolk.

MJJ Well, actually I don't think he was against the homefolks as much as the Smithsonian. You see, they claimed that Langley made that first flight, and you know Langley took his, had a boat built on the Potomac River, to make his first flight. And on the roof or on the deck of that boat, he had his airplane, and when he went to make his first flight, he barely got off the deck and he went right down into the water. Right down in the water. But Langley did, Langley did make model planes. But he did not make a you know.

SB Did Mr. Wright ever discuss Langley or...?

MJJ Not to me he didn't.

SB Or to your husband?

MJJ My husband used, he used to talk about Langley and this and that.

SB How about the suit, did you ever hear his talk about the suit against the Curtiss company?

MJJ I've heard him talk about that.

SB That he felt that they were crooked, that in other words that they didn't have a chance, as far as Curtiss was concerned.

MJJ The Curtiss company that was in Mineola, or not Mineola, but in Long Island.

SB In New York.

MJJ Yes. We were there, my husband and I we were there, one year we spent a week there with Glenn Curtiss and when he got there, his wife had just passed away a week before. He had a big family, a large family, you know.

The family was partly grown up and they were so nice. What my husband went to discuss with him, is something I don't know. He went there for a purpose but I don't know what.

SB Now, when was this?

MJJ Oh, that was in, oh that was in 19...oh was it 1920 or '21, along in there someplace. The, let's see, oh, Wilbur, I still call him Wilbur, was about six years old, the children were all small.

SB You didn't take your kids with you, did you?

MJJ All of them went with us.

SB Oh, that must have been a trip.

MJJ Yes, we all went. We went there, we were really on the trip and we were asked to come there then. Mr. Curtiss had asked us to come there but Jim, knew a lot of those people that I didn't know, see. I was at home nights with my children and my family and that's what I was doing then, see. Met my husband, I was training, nurse's training at the Miami Valley Hospital, and met him the first year, but, I finished my training before we were married, so then of course I didn't practice it after, but still it came in pretty, it wasn't time lost, it came in pretty nice.

SB Yes, I would imagine so, with six children?

MJJ Yes, with six children.

SB Yes, I could imagine that would be quite valuable, with six. Well, that was supposed to be 1920, that would be after the suit would have been all settled.

MJJ I imagine, I just don't know the right year, but it was when the children were small. And really, I don't know real quick I could tell you how old Wilbur is, forty, he's in his forty-second, or something like that, because my oldest boy is fifty-two, so he's the third one, and they were close together, so he was up in there and he was just a youngster, you know.

SB And yet you don't remember why, or what it was that Mr. Jacobs discussed

with Mr. Curtiss?

MJJ No.

SB I don't know whether it would be significant or not.

MJJ No, I just don't know. I just, I just don't know. You see too, that's a good many years ago, the years go by, and those things get a little bit dim on your, you know. You just don't remember everything.

SB Oh, sure.

MJJ Because at the time, you don't put any importance to it, see.

SB Yes.

MJJ Just like today, we sit here today, a hundred years from now, if they bring this back, why this would be miraculous, see. You see, that's the way things go. Well, what did you say, what did you do? Well, the guy couldn't, maybe you couldn't tell them, well I know you won't be here a hundred years from now, but any way. What I mean, when you get older if you were to say about talking you'd probably, you might not remember hardly anything that was said.

SB That's right.

MJJ Because it's just a matter of course.

SB That's why we have this tape recorder. (laughter)

MJJ Yes.

SB Keep it all down.

MJJ Yes, that keeps it all down.

SB Yes. Oh, dear. In the later years, did you ever see Mr. Wright, after your husband had passed away?

MJJ I saw him several times. He came several times to see me after he passed, after my husband passed away, and he really, Orville's death was really sort of unexpected, in a way. But he, he was a reticent man and he wasn't, I knew him and was at ease with him and still you couldn't just feel, feel like you've known forever at any time.

SB What would you talk about when he'd come?

MJJ Oh, we talk about the children. He wanted to know what they did today, and if they were good. And what I was doing. If I could get enough cooked for Jim, and had I baked any cookies lately and talked like that to me but nothing, nothing about his work because I wouldn't know anything about that, see.

SB Family things in other words.

MJJ What?

SB Family things?

MJJ Yes, just family things.

SB Your husband was a big man then?

MJJ What was it?

SB Your husband was a big man?

MJJ You mean in stature?

SB Yes.

MJJ Yes, yes, he was a big man.

SB Was Mr. Orville, he wasn't heavy, was he?

MJJ Very slight. Very slight of build.

SB Is that so.

MJJ Very, very slight.

SB Was he a big eater, or not?

MJJ No, no. Kinda birdish, in his way.

(laughter)

SB I know, when I talked to Mr. Buster Wright, he liked to cook. That he really enjoyed cooking.

MJJ Orville did?

SB Orville did? yes?

MJJ Well, I didn't know that, now Buster, that's the nephew.

SB Yes.

MJJ That's Lorin's son.

SB Yes.

MJJ The one where, the one that's works with the flowers, and the fruit and things like that down there at, where's he live?

SB Bellbrook.

MJJ Bellbrook, I never can think of that name. Down there he used to live right up in here, a few squares down there in kind of a hilly place where he lives, sort of hilly through there.

SB Oh, on Grand, down here, yes.

MJJ No, he didn't live on Grand, he lived up in one of those streets up in through that way, near Grand but not on Grand. I can't think of it now. Up not too far from Newton. Up in through there is where he lived.

SB Okay.

MJJ And he used to be down at the shop too and my husband, down there, and they put out these toy airplanes by the thousands. Like the rolled oats company would order them to sent out, they had them advertised on their boxes, you sent so much in and get a plane, and they'd order them by the thousands and thousands.

SB That's interesting. What other kinds of toys did they manufacture, do you remember?

MJJ That's all, just the planes.

SB That's all. Well, I've bought lots of those little planes.

MJJ They used to buy the rubber tubing, oh a little bit bigger around than my thumb, and they had trouble getting the rubber out, so my husband brought a little machine home that you, electric machine and I used to cut the rubber for them and used to we'd get boxes about this high, and about this tall of these little rubbers. They used a rubber bands, you know to put them together, and to draw back. And I used to cut them for them sometimes

when they needed it real bad, somebody to help you know.

SB How did you ever find time?

MJJ Oh, I just found time.

(laughter)

MJJ You have to put talcum powder on the rubber and you'd have to wet them before you cut them and then after they were cut, you'd have to sprinkle talcum powder so they wouldn't stick together.

SB Sounds like you were a pretty busy person, I would say.

MJJ Not re..., that Lorin lived right, you know where Bryn Mawr down here, that first house there on the corner there.

SB Oh, is that so?

MJJ Oh, no the second house on the corner. He lived there for years, until she passed away and...

SB Then you got to know the children fairly well?

MJJ Well, I got to know him, well I got to know them real well. Not the children, I, they moved there when their children weren't with them any more.

SB Oh, I see.

MJJ They were, they were, or Lorin was the oldest, no they had, they had, now he has a brother out west.

SB He just passed away.

MJJ What's his name?

SB Milton, no it was Reuchlin. Reuchlin. R-e-u-c-h-l-i-n. Reuchlin.

MJJ Well, I think that he is the eldest the oldest of the family, I think Lorin comes next. And then I think Wilbur.

SB Then Wilbur and then...

MJJ Kath, and then Orville is the baby. He always had a twinkle in his eye.

SB Is that so?

MJJ That old twinkle in his eye.

SB Did he ever play any jokes on the family or the kids?

MJJ No, no he never played any jokes on us.

SB (laughter) I mean, you know, a major joke.

MJJ Yes, no, no, he didn't.

SB He must of, he had a twinkle, he must of enjoyed life.

MJJ Yes, yes.

SB Certain amounts.

MJJ Yes, it was nice to have known him. I'm always proud that I knew him and I know my husband was proud to think that he could be trusted. A man like Orville is somebody that you feel that if they trust you, that you feel that you're appreciated.

SB Yes, I would imagine so. And he must of had a fine mind too.

MJJ Oh, yes.

SB It must have been an experience being around that mind.

MJJ Oh, oh, yes.

SB Yes.

MJJ Yes.

SB To be able to start something with so little, it seems that they really had no books to go by.

MJJ No, no. No, no, no.

SB Didn't they use your basement occasionally to...?

MJJ Sometimes they did go down into the basement and try out something. And then another thing that I was going to tell you. When he was a young man, out there on the west side, did you know that he started up a West Side newspaper? Did you know that? And did you know who his partner was?

SB Brookins for a while.

MJJ No, Paul Laurence Dunbar was his partner.

SB Oh, no, I didn't know that.

MJJ Didn't you know that?

SB I knew that he had some association with Dunbar.

MJJ Well, that's where, that's where his association was. A real young man. Old Laurence Dunbar.

SB Is that so?

MJJ Of course now those days, that west side was a pretty nice place too, you know. It isn't quite as crappy as it is now out there. It is run down out there, you'll have to admit that.

SB Oh, yes.

MJJ But, but it was different in those days, really. And then on, on that Hawthorn Street where they lived and other streets in through there, which now are sort of passe, they were beautiful places at that time.

SB That's true. Yes, someone told me that he had contributed to a number of Negro churches in Dayton, do you know of any of his contributions, did he...?

MJJ No, I don't, no I don't, I don't know.

SB But he had a sympathy for the colored man, because of his association with Dunbar.

MJJ Well, they were to get this newspaper, they got this up together, this newspaper. They were partners in it.

SB Yes, well that's interesting. Because it is I have read that he, that they had the newspaper, don't know where I've read of it, the association with Dunbar was not mentioned.

MJJ Even you know when they were boys at home, they, they worked on airplanes they sent away someplace one time, I guess you heard this, and sent away for something about, information about something and the letter came back, Mrs. Orville and Wilbur Wright, and their mother says, well, she says, I sure know who this is for. She knew it was for them.

SB Mrs. Orville. (laughter)

MJJ They said that the first wind tunnel that they ever thought of or made was made out of a starch box. Made of certain...

SB Isn't that something?

MJJ Yes. See that, that seems to have interested them from its beginning in a way, didn't it?

SB Yes, well, one, one place it says that their father brought a...

MJJ Plane, a toy.

SB Yes, toy and at that, that fascinated them and that, that kind of got them started.

MJJ Yes, yes.

SB Did he ever express a regret that he hadn't had more formal education? Never did?

MJJ Of course now, he wouldn't do that, you know. You know, if you know Orville like I do, you don't, he wouldn't do that. He keeps his, he keeps his, what you might say, pride, or I don't know what you call it. What ever he thinks in lines like that, he don't speak out. Or never has to us. Now, now, he'd never, he's never just told me, or talked about his own life. He liked to joke, he liked a good joke about, about my husband saying about asking if he, are you all right, Orville, when just his boots were sticking out.

SB (laughter)

MJJ He just told that to everybody, and laughed, that's the only thing I heard him laugh real hardy about in my life. Is about that, he thought that was the funniest thing he ever heard.

SB Where was the rest of him?

MJJ He never forgot that, down there by Miami Shores.

SB Yes, where was the rest of Orville, when just his boots were sticking out?

MJJ Under the water.

SB Underwater.

(laughter)

MJJ Finally came up I guess.

(laughter)

SB I feel like that's an awful close grave.

MJJ You, you know Jim, Jim and Orville, and Charlie Taylor, they went together down there at the Miami. And so did Charlie Taylor go out to the what you call it, sometimes, not all the time.

SB Gosh, I would think that they would.....

(break in tape)

(end of side two)

(start of side three)

SB You might say they sort of flirted with death every day.

MJJ Yes, they'd get in that, stick their feet out, you know, just set there, and Orville would start it up, he'd pull the lever back, start it up and it would go, of course it didn't go so very high, of course they were experimenting, they didn't go high, I don't suppose it could go so high. I don't know.

SB They could if they wanted to. With their knowledge, but that wasn't the purpose of it. What did your husband wear when he was up?

MJJ Overalls with great big pockets in and like I said, they, all I did in those days was patch. He'd have screw drivers and nails and everything in and I said those were darning years.

SB Yes. That's good.

MJJ He'd always come home with his pockets torn.

SB Yes, with all the tools.

MJJ With all the tools and stuff. And then he would go up...

SB Did you ever see Orville wear anything but his white shirt and starched

collar?

MJJ Well, when he was out there at the what you call it, he wore a coverall, a coverall over his clothes.

SB Oh, he did?

MJJ Yes.

SB Then, then he'd take it off and leave it off?

MJJ Then take it off, see? They just had this one great big hangar out there, that just, what you call it, would just, would just take care of that one thing. See, that Simms Station used to be a bus stop in those days, not a bus stop but a traction, traction shop.

SB And he'd leave the clothes off there. And how, would they drive out?

MJJ Drive out, my husband and I, he'd go out, Orville would go out on his own car, and my husband we would go by Oxford Avenue. My husband and I, we'd go out in our car, and often on Saturday or Sunday they'd go those days too, you know. Why, I'd go with him. It was nice to go out and the children would go along, play along in the field there, and they had a good time. And Orville used to laugh, asked me if I brought enough of this, did you bring enough cookies, did you bring, he always afraid I wouldn't have enough cookies to go around.

(laughter)

MJJ When he was, I enjoyed him, and I guess maybe because my husband enjoyed him, and my husband was very fond of him.

SB In a close personal way.

MJJ Yes.

SB As well as admiring.

(break in tape)

SB And then the whole family just spent a day out, and the kids...

MJJ Yes.

SB Whoops, there we go.

JJ Are we through?

(break in tape)

(end of tape)

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