

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

American Bicentennial

Personal Experience

O.H. 1347

MERRILY SUSAN JONES

Interviewed

by

Joseph Paul Alessi

on

December 6, 1990

MERRILY SUSAN JONES

Merrily Susan Jones was born on September 24, 1942 in Youngstown, Ohio, the daughter of Richard H. Beringer and Clera Jean Robeson. Mrs. Jones attended public schools, and graduated from Boardman High School in 1960. Following her graduation, Mrs. Jones enrolled in Youngstown State University. Prior to her graduation however, she was hired, without a degree, as an elementary school teacher. This was the result of a teacher shortage. While teaching grade school full-time, she completed her education, and graduated from Y.S.U. in 1966 with a BS in Education.

Currently, Mrs. Jones is a self employed artist. Her painting style is known as Decorative painter. She uses historic and self made patterns to decorate individuals homes or belongings. Additionally, Mrs Jones belongs to several organizations. Some of these groups include the Ohio Art Guild and the Art Alliance, Youngstown. Mrs. Jones also is a teacher for Sunday School. Mrs. Jones is a member of the First Church of Christ Scientist.

Mrs. Jones currently resides at 4680 Heritage Drive in Canfield, Ohio, with her husband Richard. She married Richard Jones on August 22, 1965. Their marriage was fruitful, and they were blessed with four children. Mrs. Jones has one daughter, Tiffany, and three sons, Brian, Eric, and Matt. Mrs. Jones is still active, and enjoys art of all types, American History, and traveling.

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INTERVIEWEE: MERRILY SUSAN JONES

INTERVIEWER: Joseph Paul Alessi

SUBJECT: Bicentennial, Mahoning Valley Brigade, BAR

DATE: December 6, 1990

A: This is an interview with Mrs. Merrily Jones for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on The American Bicentennial, by Joseph Alessi, at 4680 Heritage Drive Canfield, Ohio, on December 6, 1990, at 1:45 p.m.

Good afternoon Mrs. Jones before we start asking questions about the Bicentennial itself I would first like to ask some questions about you. First of all, when and where were you born?

J: I was born in Youngstown, Ohio on September 24, 1942.

A: In what part of Youngstown?

J: At Northside hospital.

A: Where did you live at in Youngstown when you were growing up?

J: Some place on Millet Avenue when I was born and then we moved shortly afterwards to 76 Terrace Drive in Boardman and I stayed there until I was married.

A: Can you tell me something about your childhood as you were growing up? Some of your hobbies, things that you liked to do and school?

J: Well, we had just a great neighborhood. It was a good place to grow up. Boardman was a very good school while I was attending there and I think that I had a really good education coming out of Boardman. I know that by the time that I went to college Boardman had prepared us well enough that college was fairly simple.

A: What type of hobbies did you engage in?

J: We just had a lot of kids on the street and the kids all played together and did a lot of sports. As far as hobbies are concerned really I don't remember to much. The only thing that I do remember was in high school, I just lived to get to art class. I loved it and that has been my occupation ever since.

A: What is it about art that makes you like it so much?

J: Creativity. Doing things different. I don't like the same thing all of the time. I just really like it.

A: With that, describe your personality?

J: I am known for talking to much. I am enthusiastic, loud. People say that my name suits me.

A: Merrily?

J: Yes.

A: What does it mean?

J: Happy.

A: I never correlated the two together. I never thought of Merrily as being happy.

J: Do you know the song, "Merrily we roll along?"

A: After graduation from Boardman High School did you go to college?

J: Yes.

A: Can you tell me something about your college life?

J: Oh, I loved college. I attended Youngstown State University and I worked at the University. I was the Protestant Chaplin's secretary and I went full-time for three years and in those three years I just had a real good time. I belonged to Beta Sigma Omicron sorority which now, is changed to Alpha Zeta. The name was changed during what would have been my fourth year in college and I was teaching in the public school system by then. The Chaplin's office was above the Dean's

office. Do you want some interesting bits here?

A: Yes.

J: Okay, the one day a girlfriend came into the office and she had a pogo stick with her and as a kid we had pogo sticks. My parents had bought my brother and I pogo sticks to play with and so I knew how to use one. So, anyway all of the sororities and fraternities, they really were the activity bit of the social life of the University at the time. They put on all of the dances and the social fun things and it was quite a fun place to be while we were in college and that was between 1960 and 1964. Anyway one of the fraternities was sponsoring a pogo stick race on Lincoln Avenue and then the winners of that race were going to pogo at Eagles ballroom and those winners received a trophy. There were so many trophies given during these days you know if you were a queen you got a trophy and all. Well, the sororities and the fraternities houses would keep these trophies in a trophy room. And anyway, what happened was on this day I won the largest trophy the sorority had ever gotten. We used to use it as a mirror and it was always a fun thing because all that I did was pogo stick and there were the queen's trophies and all these other trophies, scholastic trophies, and I got the biggest one because I could pogo stick down Lincoln Avenue.

So, anyway I am on the second floor in Jones Hall in the office and I said, "I know how to do that." And Bonnie said, "I really don't know how to do this. I don't know how I am going to win this pogo stick race but I will try." I said, "Oh, hey, there is nothing to it." And I got up and I pogoed upstairs in the second floor of Jones Hall and right underneath me was Dean Glespy's office. And pretty soon the phone rang and, "Hey, what is all of the noise going on up there?" So, sure enough I was always getting in trouble for something like that. Well, later on that day I won the race, but I won it and I pogoed...And the judge was Dean Glespy and I pogoed right on that poor man's toe. So, twice in that day he was after me. So, anyway that night then was the dance and I won the race going down the wooden ball room floor on a pogo stick and won the largest trophy the sorority had ever had. So, that is just what college life was like. It was really fun.

A: What were the 1970's like for you? In the late sixties you had the Vietnam conflict and it seemed like...

J: Can I back track to college with one more thing?

A: Sure.

J: It was interesting because in the 1960's or I would say

1962, 1963 there was a shortage of teachers and I was in education and I was really in art education and working up there in Jones Hall the Dean of Women's office was also down the hall from me and I knew them very well and I was always crying that I was broke. I never had enough money. So, during that period of time superintendents from the school systems would come up to interview education students for jobs. And one day Kitty, the Dean's secretary, saw me in the hall and I was crying about being poor again and she said to me, "Well, do you want to come in and have an interview with Mr Miller from the New Springfield local school system? He is hiring." So, I said, "Sure, sure." Now this is my third year of college, my junior year and I had my senior year to go with student teaching. And I went in and I said "yes" to just everything and he hired me basically. I had to go to an interview with the principal. I went for an interview with the principal and at the end of the interview he realized that I was really in art and not in elementary. I got the job anyway. That is how desperate they were for teachers. I got the job as an elementary education teacher of fifth grade and I did student teaching on the job and I had to write to the state that I would take the elementary courses at the same time I was teaching. So, I taught school during the day and I went to college in the evening and took the basics like teaching of arithmetic, writing, reading and so forth. Now, today that would totally be unheard of. So, I really started working the third year out of school and as a result I think that it was another year before I actually got my degree like in 1965, so it was two years after.

A: What degree did you graduate with then?

J: Well, I have a dual-certificate. Well, I have a B.S. in Education, but then with the state I can teach art K-12 and I can teach elementary school K-8.

A: Now, back to a couple questions again. I was asking you what the 1970's were like? Coming out of the late 1960's you had the Vietnam conflict and you had almost a loss of patriotism and then you jump into the 1970's? What were the seventies like?

J: I guess a quieter period after all of the 1960's and also at that point I was raising...Very, very conscious of the homebase, I was raising small children. The 1970's...we got up to about 1974, 1975 when we got interested in and heard in family life, the family unit and education of these three children at that time. And how we got interested in the Bicentennial was that I had just heard people around talking about it and I heard that someone had joined a group and they were parading and I said to some neighbors, "Well, gee, it

would really be fun to make some colonial costumes and join in the celebration a little bit." Then someone who knew of a group that was forming got in touch with us and suggested that we go to a meeting. And so I talked to my husband and I said, "Oh, come on it will be fun. Why don't we just go and find out what this meeting is like. Let's do something extra, I mean the country it is going to be two hundred years old and let's do something." So, finally he said, "Oh, alright." And he went to this meeting. Well, he ended up more active than I was. And that happened to be our first meeting of the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade.

A: Can you recall that first meeting at all?

J: Yes, somewhat I can. I remember some of the people. Oh, I am ashamed to say now, we practically lived with them and names aren't connecting with me now...Arnie, a truck driver, a great big red-headed burly guy?

A: Did he eventually leave the Brigade? Oh, no he didn't I am thinking of someone else.

J: No, he was very active, he and his wife were very active. Anyway, I just remember getting into the fact that some people wanted us to make costumes and it was a nice group of people and that is about as far as the first meeting is concerned. And we went to so many of them that you know it becomes a blur.

A: What was your first impression, if you can recall, of the commander of the Brigade, Mr. Alessi?

J: Oh, he was perfect. We nicknamed him the "Colonel" and that is exactly what he was, the colonel. I mean, it is hard to even think that Joe Alessi is anything else but in colonial costume giving orders, commanding. That is what he was. He was super. A good guy.

A: So, you go into the Bicentennial then by word of mouth.

J: Yes.

A: Do you think that patriotism was growing in the 1970's just because of its two hundred year birthday or do you think that people were just growing up from the 1060's and that there wasn't as much hoopla or attention to socially rent?

J: I think that the 1960's were far more intense times to think about the country and what was going on, definitely. I know the Vietnam War, personally I was scarred to death that my husband was going to be drafted and all that worry and for us the Bicentennial was just a fun time. It was far more relaxed as far as...I

don't remember it as the rest of the country being so enthused in it. I think that the activities and the few people that participated in the Bicentennial activities created the fervor for the rest of the country to move forward into it. For instance, when we were trying to get material and so forth for authentic costumes, there wasn't much research material for us to get any information from. We had to send to Europe for cottons and linens and things of that sort, and natural fibers, because this country just had synthetics, If you went into a fabric store here you couldn't get anything but synthetic material. So, the Bicentennial got that thing moving till right now. I mean we are twenty years later and now we can walk into a fabric store and you can get a 100% wool, you can get a 100% cotton, you can get your synthetics too; but all of these natural fibers have come in and I think that the Bicentennial activities have created what we are experiencing now, not the other way around.

A: What was the big deal about authentic costumes if it was going to be a one year thing as a flash in the pan, why did you want to be so authentic?

J: Well, because those of us who got involved in these activities kept learning. We went to a meeting and we learned something and just the urge to learn was so great we wanted more. We went home learning and experiencing or hunting up for more information so we could go back and tell our fellow members what we had learned and this just desire for more authentic true information by the members of these organizations, which is the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade and the Brigade of the American Revolution just instilled it in us. I mean we learned and gained personally because of the research that we were going.

A: How much research would you say that you actually did?

J: Oh, a great deal. I remember going for five years trying to get an authentic costume going and every time we would think, "Oh this is it. This is right." And then we would find out, "Oh, wait a minute." We would go for little tiny checks for instance. Little tiny checks in fabric for instance. Well, if you really think about it two hundred years ago on a spinning wheel it would be very difficult to do tiny checks and certainly your ordinary camp follower wouldn't be running around in tiny checks. It would be so much easier on a loom to wave a larger check than a little small one. So, just little things of that sort.

Then we would learn how to dye our fabrics and find out what plants created what colors and how they washed out, and what you had to do to keep that color pure and

it was just five solid years of research and learning and trying. We did everything. We poured out own buttons and researched all of this stuff and now it is easy to walk out and go in authentic patterns, authentic colors, authentic designs and patterns and materials; but I think that all of that research started with the Bicentennial.

A: Where did you get most of the materials from? How did you acquire your research material?

J: Well, even that was a learning experience. I remember going up to Youngstown library one day and at the research and I think that I hauled out of there twenty books, poles. I had a girlfriend with me and the two of us were piled with books on costuming and all of these books, and it was about a month later I was at a meeting and someone who knew a lot more than I did said, "You really can't use second hand written material, you have to go to an original source." If you look at all of the copyrights on all of these books they are all second sources and I thought, "Oh, my heavens all of those books I have used. I can't really see them at all. They aren't really authentic first hand reference materials." So, you see you do all of that, I mean you have researched all of that and then you find out that that research really isn't right and so you research some more. What I have found is that the more you research the more you learn and the more you learn the more you find that you are wrong and so you do more research and it is just an ongoing experience that is never ending. So, then we got down to working as much as possible with original source material.

A: How did you get the material from the 1700's, if that is that area that you were depicting first hand resource material?

J: Well, truthfully we had to go by people who were able to get things, the actual clothes that were found in some museums, the actual and original clothes that were dug up, patterns that were found in attics and etc. And that is where they came from.

A: So, you actually had some original patterns then?

J: Yes. Well, I didn't find them but other people got them and researched them and put them into book form or paper form and that is what we ended up using. We certainly didn't start out with those clothes. I remember the first time that I saw somebody in what they would really wear I said, "That is impossible, I would never dress like that. That looks silly." Our concept of what people wore, and what they actually wore, were two different things.

A: Now, did you attend the meeting regularly or was it just a male thing?

J: Yes. No, actually it ended up with the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade, is that what you are referring to? It ended up that the men would have a meeting and the women would have a meeting because the men had different things to discuss than the women did.

A: What was a typical meeting like?

J: Where we were going to go next. Well, with the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade that was at the very beginning of all of this research that I am talking about. We were in some kind of Bicentennial activity from 1974 through 1978, 1979. So, that was quite a few years. So, the very beginning of it was with the local Mahoning Valley Colonial brigade. So, our meetings were where we would go next and really that was in 1974, 1975, and 1976. Those were the years when we marched in all of the parades in every town around and so it was always, "Where are we going to meet, and what time is the next parade, and how many parades we could fit into a day." And we did a lot of talks. We went to a lot of schools and churches and clubs and talked on clothing and the every day life of a Revolutionary camp follower.

A: Now, the Brigade was a marching unit, the men themselves were a marching unit. Did the women participate in the parade?

J: Yes, but we followed behind as would have happened during the Revolution, The women weren't really that active in the fighting, but the camp followers who were portrayed were the women who just followed along with pots and pans on their backs and did all of the menial work and that is what we portrayed, So, we followed the men, the marching unit, we followed being them.

A: How did you go about it? Did you go by a specific name at all? Was there a mention of Sons and Daughters of Liberty of something like that? Did you carry a banner or something like that?

J: Oh, I remember once in awhile we did carry a banner, but not too many.

A: Did you yourself personally participate in a lot of parades?

J: I think everyone of them.

A: How did you fare in the parade? I mean how did the Brigade do? I mean were you just another unit or did

you win?

J: Oh, we always won the best of parade. I don't think that there was a parade that we didn't get first place in it. I mean that was what was going on in the country at the time, a celebration, the Bicentennial, and there we were a group trying very hard to dress like soldiers really did and they had a gun powder that they used in the parades and created a lot of noise and fun. The crowd loved it. The men marched really well, I mean they had practiced and they knew all of the right moves and the kids were a big, big part of the fun, and the cuteness of that Brigade. The kids all had wooden rifles. The boys marched right along with their fathers and we have a picture from the newspaper of our two youngest dragging at the end of the parade. They would be dragging because they would be tired of walking and their rifles were half dragging on the ground and some newspaper reporter thought that that was a pretty good picture. So, that made the front page in the Boardman news at that time. The kids really did a super job.

A: When you were marching in the parades or you were involved you said, "that it brought a cuteness to the Brigade," was the Brigade more than just a club or a group?

J: No, it was a group of people who wanted to learn about the history of the country, really it was. I don't think that it was...Everybody in that group really had to... They either had already had a love for this country's history or gained it very rapidly.

A: Where were you in the group?

J: In that group I think that is where I learned to love history, because see when I started out it was, "Oh, it would be fun just to make a costume, and to be part of the Bicentennial celebration." It was my desire to join the community in a celebration and out of that grew a sincere, and genuine love for history.

A: Now, something that I don't know how you will respond to but you said that you were always doing something in all of these parades, it seemed in the 1970's that there were a lot of parades. Now here in the 1980's it doesn't seem like you hardly see any parades at all except for maybe Thanksgiving, or St. Patrick's Day and not around the area. What can you attest for that?

J: Possibly because during the Bicentennial the fact that it was a two hundred year landmark for the country that that in itself was such a big celebration. It was in everybody's mind and it was something really for everybody in the country to celebrate where today there

isn't any one big total thing that invites everybody into a "let's have a parade." On the Fourth of July you still have parades, but you are right, there is a lack of...

A: Patriotism almost, or interest?

J: Do you know what? I also think that it had to do with our change in social life. Today, it has been going on for twenty years now. The pace of each person's everyday ordinary life is faster and faster and faster and faster. Now, twenty years ago when you had some free time to yourself you couldn't wait to go out or you would have people in for a party or something. You wanted to do something or go someplace. How many people do you know that want some time off now to be quiet and all by themselves? I mean that is a very unusual thing to have happen today. Our lives are so busy. We all run around with calendars in our hands you know a time table and so when are you going to have time to join something and go parade just for the fun of it?

A: Do you think that the Brigade would have been as successful or do you think that the Brigade would have happened in the 1960's or the 1980's as opposed to the 1970's? or was it the 1970's that time frame and the Bicentennial that allowed it to be a success?

J: Well, I think that just the fact that again it was two hundred years, which is a big landmark, particularly for this country, you know the country is only two hundred years old. It is like having a birthday that is special, like your tenth or your sixteenth or your twenty-first birthday, it is a special time and not only that, I think that it was the time to celebrate because of the Vietnam War. We had just gotten through that and with the Vietnam War it certainly wasn't a time to have fun it was more worry, and in the seventies we could be a little less worried and celebrate a little more.

A: Other than parades, can you recall some of the events that the Brigade participated in? Some of the things that they did outside of parades?

J: Oh, yes. Well, the talks and I remember how I ended up talking to a women's group and it was a fantastic experience for me. I love talking and I had never really talked in front of a lot of people before. As I said before, this whole thing was a learning experience and this is what kept everybody going because you kept learning something and you kept finding in yourself, within yourself, that you had these qualities and creative means. Men learned how to sew, they learned how to pour pewter, they learned how to build a rifle,

and it was working with your hands at a time when everything came out of a factory. So, the people who were involved in this were learning a great deal about their country, but mostly about themselves and what they could do, their own skills. And for me that was public speaking. I remember the first time we were marching down the middle of a highway at a parade and Colonel Joe Alessi said, "They expect us to give a talk on the top of a flat bed of a truck when we get to the middle of town. Who is going to talk for the women?" And I'm not really sure how I got the job, but I did get the job and I loved it. We got up on the top of that flat bed of that truck and that was our first speaking engagement. Joe Alessi was explaining to the crowd of people all about the soldiers part in the American Revolution. Then I would go to the microphone and I would explain why we were dressed the way that we were and the women part and the children's part in the American Revolution, what a camp follower was, and it was really great. Being a teacher, I loved going to the schools and taking all of the stuff in with us the muskets, and the rifles and the furs. You know we didn't always just talk about the white mans experience, the Indian got involved too and some of the members portrayed themselves as Indians. We had tepees...Well, I remember doing a few schools where we taught the kids...We took in wool that hadn't been washed, that had the lanolin in it so that they could feel the lanolin and we taught them how to spin a thread and card wool. We showed them how to pour bullets and make buttons and just all sorts of crafts. Oh, I started a toy collection during that time, a wooden toy collection, because we were the tourist attraction at the forts and the historic places that we went to, and here we are dressed in this authentic costume so we wanted toys for our small children to play with that were authentic too, They couldn't very well be playing with a big plastic ball. We are supposed to be teaching history so we...Right now I have a whole trunk full of wooden toys that we at that time hauled around with us or collected through the years. I am still collecting when when I come across one that is interesting, but the kids actually played with them, jumping jacks, Jacob's ladder, tops, wooden hoops, all kinds of toys. We would take them to the schools and teach the kids all the types that the kids two hundred years ago would have played with. A lot of them are just plastic today where they were wood then. Same toy just made of a different material.

A: In the Dispatch, which was the Brigade's paper or flier almost, a Mr. Ray Moore wrote, "Each man should be a walking, living history of the era that we are attempting to depict." How effective were the Brigade members? How effective was the Brigade?

- J: The Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade not to effective, particularly at the beginning. It was really pretty bad. The men definitely did far, far better than the women but I think that there was a lot more research available for the men. So, actually now it is not being very fair because the men got very good at it. Then women took a lot longer. When I look back at the albums we have, some of those costumes were pretty...They look like the patterns of Simplicity Pattern Book for kids Halloween costumes, absolutely nothing in relationship to what actually was worn, but as time went on, like I said, we spent about five years improving these costumes to the point where we have them down very well. We really did a good job.
- A: How do you think the attitude of the Brigade was? I mean how it changed? Talking to you right now it seems as if there was a change in your attitude from the beginning to the end?
- J: Yes, it was just "have a party for everybody's Bicentennial" to begin with and then this history caught on and then we were learning for ourselves as well as community.
- A: This catch, this idea that caught you or your interest to get you in the history aspect, was it due because of the Bicentennial era to era or was it an individual in the Brigade that motivated you to do it? What caused it?
- J: Well, definitely the Bicentennial, but it also has to deal with people who have already been interested in history before you, because if Joe Alessi had not really been a lover of American history before the Bicentennial came along he wouldn't have even thought of the idea of starting a unit. And there was Pieper.
- A: Frank? Oh, you are thinking of the drummer George Weadon?
- J: No. Those were locals who were very good. But I'm referring to the BAR, Brigade of the American Revolution. He wrote his doctorate on Fort Lawrence and he portrayed an English General.
- A: General or Major Pieper?
- J: Major Pieper, that is who I am talking about.
- A: Tom Pieper.
- J: Yes, Major Thomas Pieper. Well, I mean he came to the colonial brigade and I remember that I was not at that

meeting but the fervor that he developed through the organization was talked about for months after because he really knew his history and he knew what people should look like. He had been invited to the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade and he was telling them that they were all wrong and that they should be doing this and that they should be doing that and how to do it and everybody was just floored. "I just made this costume and this man is telling me that it is all wrong." it took a while before peoples attitudes were "well, if we are going to portray history let's get with it and improve our looks and do this right." And this is part of this research, never ending research that went on to get a better look, to educate ourselves and the community better. But it was people like Joe Alessi and Tom Pieper who really had that love for history before the Bicentennial ever came along and who did so much research and had such a desire to share it that got, well, hundreds of people involved and then they ended up loving history. It hasn't quit either. I gave a talk this year to a class in a middle school. I didn't get a chance to, but I was asked to give a talk to the elementary school at Thanksgiving time and my neighbor, who is a teacher, borrowed my costumes to wear to her school. So, even this many years later it is a constant source of resource material for my community, just coming from our house.

A: Now, the Bicentennial officially ended in 1976. That is when the celebration was thrift. However, we know that there are other organizations that carried on afterwards or our growths or things started because of the Bicentennial. Now, you were involved in the Brigade of the American Revolution, which is known as the BAR, tell me something about he BAR? What was it like?

J: Well, it is just a...Actually I have been talking about it. The Bicentennial, the big day of the big year was 1976, but the war actually went on for years so all over the country it was celebrated, the specific battles were celebrated right on through to the end at York; and we participated in a lot of those. So, the Brigade of the American Revolution, BAR, was definitely a group of even more dedicated historians. We just traveled further. We traveled all over the East. Any place where the American Revolution actually participated. I mean where the battles really were, wherever history took place during the American Revolution we went. We stayed in many of the forts and recreated the battles, many of the battles of the American Revolution and in those particular places we were part of the tourist attraction and that is what I spoke of before. The kids had to play with authentic toys and we had to dress in authentic costumes and live authentically as possible while the public was viewing us and what we

were doing. We were living history and we all loved it, just loved it.

A: Now, you mentioned that you were living history, why did you do it? I mean you wanted to have a party and the party was there but it was over, but why did you do it?

J: I suppose by that time it got to be a selfish thing than anything because you just learned so much and once you learn it you want to do it. You know if you learn how to sew hand sown button holes on a uniform you don't want to sit in your living room and hand sew those button holes and never use it. The BAR gave us the opportunity to hand sew those button holes and pour those pewter buttons and sew them onto that wool jacket and wear it and wear it out in public and to show other people what a real honest to gosh revolutionary war uniform jacket really looked like. So, first it was a selfish thing, you learned, secondly, you could show it off and then thirdly, you were really teaching and the desire to teach the community or the rest of the world what it was truly like had a great deal to do with it.

A: When you were at some of the places that you were at you mentioned that you traveled, just in Ohio or what?

J: No, actually in 1977 we had our fourth child. Let's see, he was born December 14th, 1977 so it was in 1978 we traveled so much that year, that we started traveling when he was just a few months old and in March of that year, all the way through October every other weekend. Our family knew how to pack and how to unpack in a few hours. The kids got so they could talk to anybody in public. It was just such an educational thing for everybody in our family. It was just unbelievable. I remember what it did for our children. Our children...We could open the door of the car and when we would reach a place the two boys would...Now let's see, they would have been six and seven and eight and nine during those few years there, well younger than that, but when we had the baby, when we had the four of them. So, say a six year old and an eight year old and then our daughter would have been twelve so for a twelve year old and children of that age they would get out of a the car and the first thing that we would think about were the necessities of life, where to get the fresh water and they would go find the fresh water, the spikets or whatever. They would find the restrooms and they would find where food was going to be coming from and they would find were the sleeping quarters were. I mean isn't this basic to every generation that has been living for centuries you know? And it was interesting that they learned to do these things that you know...We didn't have to go and do it, our children

would go do this. Then they had the capacity of no matter who it was they could stand and talk to a total stranger and talk to them about something educational. What they were actually living. They were living this history and so they learned how to talk, they learned how to speak in public, they learned how to handle themselves on stage. They grew up sitting on ground that shook from cannons going off without fear fortunately. It was a great way to learn about war without our being in it you know. They saw a great deal of the war. There were two places that issued stamps where we were, Philadelphia was one, a French day. There were French diplomats that came over. These kids met them. They would sit down and talk to reporters and journalists. And the next day they could read stories about themselves in newspapers and see themselves. We would go to hotels at night and watch...I know this sounds terrible but it really wasn't, they're father participate in a battle during the day and they would watch the news and it was nothing to them to be on the news or particularly to watch dad die on the hill. They would say, "Well, dad died good today, or very well today." On the eleven o'clock news cast. So, they were introduced to journalism, television, just being able to talk to the public, to know how to travel, what a fantastic education experience.

Well, you asked where we traveled. I will tell you what I just can't remember all of the places. I remember some of them. Let's see,...

A: You went to Philadelphia, which one there is so much at Philadelphia.

J: We saw everything because we would sight-see through every place that we were at. Particularly at a place like Philadelphia.

A: Are you trying to think of the different forts that you were in?

J: Yes.

A: Where you in a lot of them?

J: Yes. Rome, New York was one.

A: Dearborn, Michigan?

J: Oh, yes we stayed three years in a row. We stayed inside the village and that is living history.

A: It is pretty up there.

J: Yes, that was one. See, here is another example that I

remember several, but anyway one of them was with my daughter. Now, she was about eleven at the time and dressed in colonial costume and that is a long skirt with an apron. And there were geese and chickens out around a pond. Now we live in suburbia and there aren't any animals like that around and so this was a learning experience she decided that she would go up and pet one of them and they went after her. She took her apron and shooed them with her apron and that was really a cute little scene to see her there.

Then another one, at Greenfield Village, after the tourist went home, we could sit around a bonfire and we would play instruments. My husband got a dulcimer kit for Christmas, built it, and took it on our travel with us where he would play it around the campfire. We learned music. We learned how to build a fire. We learned how to set up a camp, survival things. But also Greenfield Village after hours there was a building with a wall around it. They have a beautiful colonial Queen Anne ballroom and we had dances up there with Revolutionary Early American music and everybody that was at the dance was in costume and the musicians as well. They played with all of the older instruments and those were fantastic experiences. I mean it is just like turning a page in history and living in another era. Well, there is an eleven year old daughter of ours that is dancing a minuet with her father down in an eighteenth century ballroom, spectacular. It was great.

A: If you had to do it all over again would you?

J: Oh, absolutely. Instantly and absolutely.

A: I kind of guessed on that answer. Do you have anything else to add? Can you think of anything else?

J: No.

A: Is the Bicentennial officially over? I mean does the BAR still exist? Do they still go to meetings?

J: Yes, the BAR does still exist. The Bicentennial ended with the last battle with the Revolution, but the Brigade of the American Revolution still carries on giving mock battles at many historic spots year round and all over. In the East is where they take it.

A: Do you still participate?

J: No, because of family life, it was time to stop. I mean your children have to get involved in baseball and you can only go to so many baseball fields and so many forts. And after that one summer of traveling every other week it just got progressively harder with the

children starting to be active in other school functions and sports. It did not however, at all, in any sense, stop as far as family is concerned, in our learning about American History. In fact I now have a career because of it.

Now, what happened is that I have an art degree and in all of these places, these forts have museums attached to them or there are museums in the towns that we visited and we were constantly researching things for the Revolutionary period, furniture, housing. You know I was interested in the everyday life. That is what made history interesting to me. So, I would see this art work of our country. Now, at home the tole and decorative painting syndrome came in. You know how we have fads here and there. Well, the fad of decorative painting, tole painting it is called, came into being, I had a girlfriend who urged me to take a class in tole painting. So, I did. Well, I just went crazy because she was telling me to trace patterns and so forth and paint on tin using patterns that somebody else had drawn up and here I am an art student out of the university, but I did enjoy myself. So, they were calling it tole. Well tole is a word for tin and when I would go to these museumes I would see the original tole pieces done and they didn't look anything like what todays painting is supposed to be, which is actually method painting. It is just teaching the every day person how to paint and how to play around with art. So, it is todays method painting is what I was painting. Infact I ended up teaching classes in it myself. So, in that respect I got into the teaching of the classes of it, but I also always wanted to know how to do the historic stuff and I came across a teacher who knew how. In fact one thing lead to another and I ended up taking lessons from Cornealia Keegan, from Hudson, Ohio for off and on for five years and she is one of the original founding members of the Early American Decorative Society. They were the first organization founded to preserve historic American Decorative arts. The organization was founded by Susan Brazier, who was the first women in the U.S. to really do any research on Early American Decoration. That includes tole painting, painting on tin, which was done by the itinerant tinsmith and sign painters. It is their own painting of the eighteen hundreds. It is stensiling of homes. We couldn't have wallpaper to easily because it got dirty by the time it got shipped over from England. People found different ways of decorating their homes. All of these decorative arts I learned through going to Cornelia Keegan in Hudson. I had always loved stenciling in the first place so I took to it like a duck in water you know. I have been cutting and designing stenciles for people ever since. I do Rufus-Porter type murels on peoples walls. I just got through painting

ribbons on a ceiling and flowers and vines on another ceiling, sponging walls and doing fax treatments, fake graining, taking a metal door and making it look like wood, which I have done in my house. I have a job this coming week to marblize pillars in someone's basement. All of these have really been a result of this Bicentennial. I mean the art was before that but the two mixed ended up with me having this decorating business.

A: So, the Bicentennial had a large impact on your life?

J: Profound, absolutely.

A: Do you think that the Bicentennial caused a rebirth of American history?

J: Oh, yes.

A: Why?

J: Just like it did for me because we wanted to research these things. We would go into fabric stores and ask for these fabrics and they would say that they don't have them. If you get enough people walking into a store asking for something sooner or later it is going to get made and you are going to find it. Right now you can find any of those fabrics. That is just one example. Books, I used to go into museum bookstores because that is the only place that you could find a good book for research or special books. You couldn't just go into a bookstore and find research books. Now you can. There are so many more of them. And the museum bookstores are just jammed packed with them now. Just a far greater number of research materials out today. And I just really do feel that that was the beginning of it.

A: Do you have anything else?

J: No.

A: Well, thank you for your time it was very interesting and I am glad I got to talk to you.

J: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW