This interview was conducted by a student in an oral history seminar in the Department of History and American Studies at the University of Mary Washington. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows: Rosie the Riveter and the World War II American Home Front Oral History Project: An Oral History with Ruth Weaver conducted by Sarah Tagg, 2012, Department of History and American Studies, University of Mary Washington, 2012.
Discursive Table of Content—Ruth Weaver

0:00- 10:01
Born December 1909, family lived in Texas, family history: dad was born in Austria, three siblings—Marriage—Depression—Education.

10:02- 18:40
Great Depression: rationing—memories of World War II—work experience—marriage—WWII—most influential event in life.
Interview with Ruth Weaver
Interviewed by: Sarah Tagg
Transcriber: Sarah Tagg
[Interview #2: November 13, 2012]

[Note: Mrs. Weaver’s daughter, Mary Mann, added the information that is italicized and in brackets after the interview took place.]

0:00-0:07
Tagg:
Hi, my name is Sarah Tagg and I am interviewing Ruth Weaver on November thirteenth at one PM.

0:08-0:10
Tagg:
And so, what is your full name?

0:11-0:13
Weaver:
Well what do you want I’ve had three names.

0:14-0:16
Tagg:
The name you were born with.

0:17-0:22
Weaver:
I was born [Maude Ruth Nyc, Jr.]

0:23-0:24
Tagg:
And then,

0:25-0:26
Weaver:
The name was spelled, Nyc.

0:27-0:30
Tagg:
Nyc. So your full name is Ruth Weaver right now?

0:31-0:41
Weaver:
My full name is Ruth Nyc Weaver. We dropped the other two names that I had that were the two other marriage names.
When were you born?

December 1909.

Where were you born?

Kerrville, Texas.

Is that near San Antonio?

Seventy miles from San Antonio.

Can you describe growing up in the area?

[Her father, Frederick Francis Nyc (this family now goes through FFNIV) was a diplomat from Austria-Hungary, who spoke 7 languages. Assigned to Galveston, he decided to become a citizen and move to Kerrville. He got a job at the Schreiner bank. He met “Maude Ruth Burge” and married her. She was the belle Kerrville. They married in the only church in town—a Baptist one. Fred Nyc, Jr. was born a couple years later. When a priest came to town, because she had TB, and Kerrville had a sanitorium to heal the disease. They were married in the Catholic church.” Our family has been Catholic]
for 400 years and it’s not going to stop now!” However, Ruth’s first Sunday School teacher’s name was “Ophelia Butt.” At the Baptist church.]

1:03-1:09  
Weaver:  
I remember when World War One started, I remember when World War Two started.

[When the old black cast-iron stove was put outside, mom wrote out neighborhood “news” in chalk on it, for all to see. They had an indoor toilet. Her mom insisted they always wash their hands!]

1:10  
[Pause]

1:11-11:12  
Tagg:  
What was it like?

1:13-1:50  
Weaver:  
Well, we just knew there was a war going on and my father was from Europe and he hated to think that his country was going to war. He was from Austria, and Austria and Germany were combined sorta. Spoke the same language and at one time long years and years and years before had the same, I don’t know how it was but it was connected otherwise. So anyhow, he was sorry that his country was going to war.

[He wanted to show off his family to his mother/ he only liked her at that point, and they were set to travel “home” when he found out she had died. It was 1914, and had they gone, they may well have been trapped there during the Great War.]

1:49- 1:50  
[Pause]

1:51- 2:19  
Weaver:  
And he was settled over here very settled and very wound up. He had come over to see the country and he had liked it so he stayed. And he got a position in a bank and he eventually married somebody and they had the family of four children. Well, four children you might say because they took one in from another family.

[They had Fred, Jr. in 1905 (mom called him Bubba), Ruth in 1909, and Nellie Marie, in 1917.]
Tagg: How many years did you live there?

2:24-2:23

Weaver: What?

[December 1909 – 1928]

2:24-2:25

Tagg: How many years did you live there?

2:26-2:40

Weaver: Oh, I lived there until, until I could finish high school and I married and went off to Arizona to live and lived there for four years and then came back to Texas again.

2:41-2:43

[Pause]

2:44-2:45

Tagg: So, you said you had siblings?

2:46

Weaver: Huh?

2:47

Tagg: You had siblings?

2:48-2:49

Tagg: Brothers and sisters?

2:50-2:51

Weaver: Have what?

2:52

Tagg: Did you have siblings?

2:53-3:18
**Weaver:**
Oh, I had three children from one family and one from another. [That]he first time I was married I had a child so that child was accepted by the third husband. I had three marriages. The third marriage lasted [from 1941, until he died in 1979.]

3:19- 3:20

*Pause*

3:21- 3:25

**Tagg:**
How did you meet your husbands? The first and then… [Trails off]

3:26-3:27

**Weaver:**
How did I meet what?

3:28- 3:29

**Tagg:**
How did you meet your husbands?

3:30

**Weaver:**
How did I meet them?

3:30

**Tagg:**
Mhm!

3:31- 5:09

**Weaver:**
Well my girlfriend and I went to school, went to a tournament one day and out of a… well, it was a boys college so to speak, so we went out there to the tournament and while we were there we met, I met, a young man and he kept pulling my hair in pig tails and he finally got my barrette and he wouldn’t give it back. And then he came back and he sent it back to me by mail and he asked if he could have a date for Saturday night, to go to the movies. And my father said, “well, this will be your first date so you have to be back in as soon as the movie is over.” So we were back at home by I guess it was nine or nine-thirty. Then after that I saw the young man quite often and that was it. He went back to Dallas and I stayed in Kerrville. Eventually, we decided to get married and that was it so we were married and then in the end, let’s see… oh, I remember. It only lasted six years and then I met another man [Joel Watson] and it was perpetual until he died. That was it.

[From 5:09 to 5:21 background noise interference]

5:22- 5:29
Tagg:
Looking back, to where you lived as a child, did you notice any different like religions or ethnicities?

[There were Baptists and Catholics, probably African Americans, Indians, and Germans.]

5:30- 5:35
Tagg:
Did you notice any minorities or people from different areas?

5:36- 5:51
Weaver:
Oh, people were from everywhere. They came to my hometown for their health because it had good qualities for tuberculosis and cured many occasions of tuberculosis.

[From 5: 51 to 5:57 background noise interference]

5: 57- 6:13
Weaver:
It was in the hill country. So were stayed there and my father liked it so well that he had accepted it many, many, many, many, years before that so we just considered ourselves [citizens.]

[He had some safety concerns during WWI because his name sounded German, but nothing really happened.]

6:14- 6:17
[Pause]

6:18- 6:25
Tagg:
As a child did you go anywhere for fun? Did you go to any play grounds or any entertainment like the movies when you were free?

[After school they stopped by the drugstore for a cherry coke, or an ice-cream soda. Her sister, Nellie, had an open tab there! At the playground someone kicked her mouth as she went up the ladder on the siding board, so Ruth had a black front tooth all through her teens, till it was finally repaired at about age 23, church picnics by the Guadalupe River. Mom nearly drowned when she was ten. She went down three times before (?) jumped in with his watch and white suit and shoes to save her. “My dad never even said thank you or bought him new clothes.” She hated swimming ever since. They played baseball at school. She ran the bases in high heels cause they made her play anyway.]
Did I do what?

6:28- 6:32
What did you do for fun? Did you go to the movies as a child?

6:33- 7:05
**Weaver:**
Oh, my father… [Laughs] this sounds silly. My father, had bookkeepers in his office who [sorted] through what they did. The two bookkeepers kept the books for other people like ranchers and farmers and things and my father was the one who was collecting their money because they had hired him to do it. So in other words, they were…he was older. [Trails off]

7:06- 7:37
**Weaver:**
Yes, he hired bookkeepers to keep books from farmers, and ranchers who asked him to see that there was any way for them to [?] in other words they were employing my father and my father in turn hired two people do things to check their work and so that was another way that we made it for the family. And it lasted for many years.

7:38- 7:39
[Pause]

7:40- 7:43
**Tagg:**
Did you attend primary school or secondary?

[She went to Catholic school for eight years then finished at Tivy High School in 1928.]

7:44- 8:32
**Weaver:**
Uh huh. I went to school when I was five I think and had Kindergarten and first grade, and then I went on to fourth grade and on up and went to the High School and that was what I was moving forward to for college. But, I got married instead, you see and instead of having then I found out that I was going to have a baby and she was born oh, I guess eighteen months after we were married.

[She went to college with her husband for a short while, but became pregnant. When the dean found out “Oh, you don’t feel well?” “No, it’s just morning sickness.” “What?” “You must not realize I’m a married student.” “You can’t be a married student!” It was not allowed. She had to quit college.]
Tagg:
What was her name?

[“Wilma Ruth.” She renamed herself “Billie” when she was six.”]

8:35- 8:37
[Pause]

8:38- 8:48
Weaver:
My name was Ruth and my sister-in-law’s name was Bill[ie] so it was a combination together and we called her Bill[ie] Ruth.

8:49- 8:52
Tagg:
When you went to school did you have any favorite subjects?

8:53- 8:57
Tagg:
As a child when you went through Elementary school did you have any favorite subjects?

8:58-8:59
[Pause]

9:00- 9:30
Weaver:
I always liked to draw. I was always drawing and I loved English. I liked everything except Math, and I thought it was terrible. My father was almost a genius and he expected me to be perfect in it and he kind of ruined me, made think I was never going to be any good in it. But I guess I learned if there’s something who expected so much out of me.

9:31
[Pause]

9:32- 9:33
Tagg:
Do you remember the Great Depression?

9:34
Weaver:
Mhm.

9:35
Tagg:
Could you describe it?
Weaver: Well, the Great Depression. Yeah, I remember what had happened. I remember most things, and we did without them like jello and all sorts of things that we could do without that the soldiers overseas couldn’t.

[Joel and Mom had just found a house in AZ and had little Billie and the Market crashed. He lost his job and couldn’t keep the house. They moved into an apartment with a bedroom and small kitchen, with a shared bathroom way down the hall. It was rough. They divorced in 1932 and she moved to her mother’s home in Houston. Nellie took precedence at the time. “You’ve had your chance. It’s Nellie’s turn to get an education.” So Nellie went to college and mom took some stenography and secretarial classes. Her mom watched Billie, mom had to decide whether to spend ten cents on a three mile each-way, bus ride, or eat lunch. She got a good job with GMAC (General Motors) as a secretary. She stayed late one evening to type a letter, went down to the bus stop, and watched her bus driving off. “Darn!” she said. “What’s the matter?” Said a man about five steps in front of her. Turning around, “I just missed my bus!” “Well, if you’ll trust me, I’ll drive you home, it’s where I live.” The next day he was there at her doorstep to take her back to work. That’s how she met Van Weaver, (John van Ostrand Weaver.) Dad worked at the Executive Office Building and CIA building. He worked till he was 76. My dad wanted Sunday’s quiet. They worked in the yard.]

9:57
[Pause]

9:58- 10:01
Tagg: How did the Depression affect you and your family? Did you have rationing?

[That was WWII. Depression was no money for food.]

10:02-10:04
[Pause]

10:05
Weaver: What?

10:06- 10:07
Tagg: Did you have to ration a lot food during the Great Depression?

10:08- 10:13
Weaver:

[Previous sentence stricken from transcript]
Tagg:
So what are your first memories of World War Two?

[When the radios announced Pearl Harbor they didn’t hear right away. Radio was off in the evening. They always listened to new and read newspapers. Dad got moved to Wright-Patterson AFB and Johnny was born there. Dad helped engineer the B-27 and helped the Benson Corp. calibrate airplane instruments—altimeters and such—they did exemplary job and got awards!]

Pause

Weaver:
Wars today you mean?

Tagg:
Of World War Two. Did you learn about World War Two from the news, from your family, or when the war started? Do you remember?

[Mom was 32—yes she remembers!]

Weaver:
Well I was only, let me see… nineteen seventeen wasn’t… I think it was nineteen seventeen and I was seven. And then I would stay just about even with whatever war there was and my age was going right along with it.

[She remembers Armistice Day. WWI!]

Tagg:
So, when you were married did you work at all?

Weaver:
Nuh uh. I didn’t have to.
So you were a stay home… [Broke off]

11:13- 11:16
**Weaver:**
My husband supported me.

11:15-11:16
[Pause]

11:17- 11:20
**Tagg:**
Did you, around the house did you just you know… what did you do around the house?

[When we moved from GA to VA in Jan ’59, we traveled with a moving van of furniture, another van of plants, and the station wagon with two girls, one boxer dog, on the twelve in diameter turtle, seventeen parakeets with four eggs in nesting box, two hens and a rooster. The dirt at our new house was pure red clay, and she built it up with eggshells, coffee grounds, peelings, and newspapers, and leaves. Mom was an avid gardener. She had pet cats. She would sew and had us help her cook even when I was two. She helped with scouts. She had us collect coke bottles to raise money for poor people in Hungary in 1956.]

11:21- 11:32
**Weaver:**
I did housework at home and I did, I went to parties at other people’s houses and just ordinary living.

[She joined women’s clubs and garden clubs. She read War and Peace in two weeks! She splinted bird’s wings and nursed them back to health. She raided parakeets, having as many as seventeen at one time.]

11:33
[Pause]

11:34- 11:37
**Tagg:**
Were any of your husbands in the service at all?

11:38- 11:52
**Weaver:**
Well, the first husband [Joel Watson] was the one I was talking about. And then the second husband, [Clive Wheelus, a Kerrville photographer] I was only married to him for a year. Because, let me see what was the reason… it’s.

11:52- 11:55
[Pause]
Weaver: There was some reason that I was only married to him for a year. His mother said that I had, “honey, you have made a big mistake when you married him.” She says, “you’ll find out about it,” and sure enough I found out that he was a total drunkard. He drank, he drank all the time and of course I couldn’t tolerate that and my brother couldn’t tolerate him. He came up from [Houston] and he insisted that I go back to [Houston] and live where the family had moved to. And we, I lived there until I met… see where did I meet…

[Pause]

Weaver: Oh, I guess it was the second husband that I knew for that year and then the third husband [John v. O. Weaver] was the one I met and he, we were married until he died. He must, we must have been married I don’t know how many years. He died of a… it’s… a want to say it’s some kind of [Septicemia] of some things. I can’t tell you but it was, it was something that he had I think inherited or something like that. I can’t remember.

Tagg: What was his name?

Weaver: Huh?

Tagg: What was his name?

Weaver: Gee, I didn’t know I’d ever forget names like. My first name was Weaver, and my first name was Watson, and my second name was…

[Pause]
Weaver:
My last name was Weaver and what on earth was [the] first name was Watson, the second name was [Clive Wheelus], and his brother was a photographer that ran a photography shop in my hometown. And that [his mom’s] the one who told me that, “honey you don’t know what you’ve done.” “You’ll find out.” He was the one that was the drunkard. And then after that was dissolved by my brothers solved that. Well, after that was dissolved well then I met the third husband and we never separated at all.

14:22- 14:24
Tagg:
How did you meet your third husband?

14:25- 14:47
Weaver:
The first husband, my girlfriend and I had gone to a tournament and they [were] having sports of all kinds and he was there and he was the one who pulled my hair and stole my barrette. Came to the house and took me to the show and things. That’s the first husband.

14:48- 14:50
Tagg:
What about your third husband? How did you meet him?

14:51- 14:52
Weaver:
The third one?

14:52
Tagg:
Mhm.

14:53- 15:02
[Pause]

15:03- 15:14
Weaver:

[See previous]

15:15- 15:21
(Pause)

15:22- 15:37
Weaver:
I never did give that one up. We, we knew were married and went on until he died. Diabetes that’s what he had. Diabetes.
15:38- 15:40
[Pause]

15:41- 15:49
**Tagg:**
Going back to World War Two, do you remember any… did you know about the encampment of the Japanese Americans?

15:50- 15:51
**Weaver:**
The fact who?

15:52- 15:53
**Tagg:**
The internment of the Japanese Americans?

15:54- 16:07
**Weaver:**
Oh, that no that was way back… let’s see first was the First World War, then the next time we had a war it was… was it Japan? Who did we have the Second World War with?

16:08
[Pause]

16:09- 16:17
**Tagg:**
It dealt with kind of, yeah it had to do with Japan and like there was an event with Hiroshima.

16:17
**Weaver:**
Yeah.

16:18- 16:20
**Tagg:**
August sixth-nineteen forty-five.

16:21- 16:22
[Pause]

16:23- 16:24
**Tagg:**
Do you remember that?

16:25- 16:27
**Weaver:**
Well the first one was in when I was…

16:28- 16:33
[Pause]

16-33: 16:45

Weaver:
The First World War was when I was four years old. The second war was when I was older than that. A teenager I think.

[Van was a base commander during Korean War in Newfoundland— a McAndrews AFB— and we entertained Dag Hammerskjold in our home.]

16:46-16:48
[Pause]

16:49- 16:52

Weaver:
I think they deserve and ran into each other somewhere.

16:53- 16:54
[Pause]

16:55- 16:58

Tagg:
Were you ever [taught in school] about the First and Second War?

16:59
[Pause]

17:00- 17:08

Weaver:
Oh, we talked about it all the time. We were there; whatever war was current we talked about it.

17:09- 17:15

Tagg:
Did you ever have to go through any tests like any kind of safety precautions in school?

17:16
[Pause]

17:17-17:18

Weaver:
Did I have to what?
Tagg: Take any safety precautions like did you take any classes for like safety?

[No.]

Weaver: We had a parade and I had to, we had to choose a costume and be in the parade. I think I was a World War nurse or something at one time [for Armistice Day.]

Tagg: Did you ever want to be a nurse?

Weaver: Mmhm. [no] I was a teenager when that happened.

Pause

Weaver: What was the most influential event in my life?

Marrying Van.

Tagg: Okay, and what has been the most influential event in your life?

Pause

Weaver: What was the most influential event in my life?

Marrying Van.

Tagg: Yes.

Weaver: Well, I thought the first marriage was, it lasted six years and then as I said, the second marriage lasted one year and his mother said that wouldn’t marriage and sure enough it wasn’t because of his being a drunkard. And then the third marriage, I met him, and I don’t remember how I met him now but I met him and it lasted and lasted and turned into
for eventual until he died. We were just married that’s all. Stayed married until he died. Death took him.

18:35

[Pause]

18:36-18:40

Tagg:
Okay, thank you for your time and contribution to the project.

[End of Interview]