Interview with Mrs. C. M. McCumber (nee Aureta Lewis), August 10, 1970, regarding her experiences in the Delaware Foreign Study Program 1937-38. The interviewer is Myron L. Lazarus.

Q This is a recording of the Oral History Program of the University of Delaware and we're interviewing Mrs. McCumber--what is your first name?
A Aureta.

Q Aureta McCumber, and your maiden name was what?
A Lewis.

Q All right, Aureta Lewis. And this is Myron Lazarus doing the interviewing. Mrs. McCumber, where and when were you born?
A Well . . .

Q Or is that embarrassing to ask?
A Oh, I'm not embarrassed. You're only as old as you feel. I was born on July 17, 1918 in a little town called Minersville, Pennsylvania, but fortunately moved to Wilmington when I was about two. And I attended Friends School in Wilmington.

Q What did your father do?
A He was a manufacturer, but he died when I was seven months old, so I was raised by my mother.

Q Um hmm. When you went to Friends--you spent all of your education at one place.
A Yes. I went there 11 years; I started out in second grade. And then I went to Swarthmore for my Freshman year, but I wanted to take advantage of the Delaware Junior Year Abroad and Swarthmore had a special program for their last two years, so I transferred to Women's College, as it was called then.

Q You mentioned in our talk before that you had an earlier interest in France.
A Yes, when I was rather young my mother had planned to spend the summer with a friend in Paris living in a pension and studying French.

Q This is an apartment, you mean?
A No, it's--well, like a boarding house. And at the last moment, almost, my mother's friend was unable to go because of the illness of her son, so I was packed up and gotten ready and passported and so forth, and so my mother and I went to Paris and stayed there and I celebrated my twelfth
birthday there. And my mother took me to the Hotel Ritz for tea, which is how I . . .

Q [Sounds like "Your most impressionable year . . ."]
A And of course I picked up French very easily at that age and decided to major in it, and this is one of the reasons I wanted to . . .
Q Gee, you decided very early--you know, when you were still in elementary school.
A Yes. Well, and my mother was very interested in this and she had had an interest in . . .
Q Did you continue the speaking of the language?
A Not at that time, but I took every French course. In fact, they had--I had really special French courses most of my school career because I was so much more advanced than most of the other students.
Q Well, you mean when you started Swarthmore you started pretty much out in concentrating in language.
A Oh, yes. In fact, I majored in French and minored in German. I had German all through my college career.
Q How did you hear of the Delaware program?
A Oh, I don't know. I guess I always . . .
Q Well, since you're a Delawarean . . .
A Yes, and my mother was very interested in it. She really was the one that rather decided that I should do it, so I was very much in accord.
Q With whom did you have contact at the university when you were interested in this program?
A Well, Mr. Bayem [sp] and Mr. Brinton were the heads of the French Department, and I had a great deal to do with them.
Q Well, mainly, you didn't take any courses before you--at Delaware, anyway--before you went to France.
A Well, yes, I took courses with them.
Q Oh, at Delaware?
A Yes, in my soph--see, I lived down at the Women's College in my sophomore year.
Q Well, I was under the impression that you went to Swarthmore and then went to Delaware in this junior year and then . . .
A  Oh, no, no. You see, I had my freshman year at Swarthmore, my sophomore year I lived at Women's College, and then my senior year I lived at home and commuted and graduated from Women's College.

Q  You took courses with Brinton?

A  Yes. And Mr. Bayem.

Q  Things must have changed then, because earlier you couldn't take courses from professors who were teaching in the other part of this college.

A  Oh! Well, they were definitely my . . .

Q  Oh, yeah. By then it was becoming a little different. Do you remember any particular preparations you made in starting this program?

A  No, not really.

Q  Was there any kind of planning that Dr. Bayem or Dr. Brinton--did they do with you, in getting you ready for this year abroad?

A  Well, apparently they did discuss courses of study with me, because as I had told you after your initial call, I went into my archives and got out a journal which I had written in the form of letters to my mother. And I've been rereading them and this has refreshed my memory about this experience. And I had referred to the fact that I had discussed with Mr. Brinton my possible courses and that it had helped me in arranging them with the personnel over there.

Q  Your courses at Delaware.

A  No, my courses in France.

Q  Oh, I see. In the process of going over, do you remember meeting--first meeting as a group, the whole group that was going abroad?

A  Yes, we had a meeting and--because I referred--I think we--I don't know whether we had a luncheon or something, but . . .

Q  You went to New York.

A  We went to New York, and my mother went with me, of course, and in my letters to her, I've referred to different people. Apparently we did have some sort of a meeting and between us we'd sort of sized up some of the other students to see what we thought of them.

Q  When you went to New York, did you stay overnight in New York?

A  Oh, I don't recall.

Q  Uh huh. Well, you don't remember any dinner or anything like that.

A  Well, there was definitely a get-together, but I don't recall what it was.
Q: Now, this might be a good time to discuss this. Do you remember the people who were with you?

A: Over in . . .

Q: Who were going abroad and who spent the year in France.

A: Oh, yes, and especially on rereading these letters.

Q: Who were some of the names?

A: Well, there was a girl named Lola Barnhill, who was a Wilmington girl, who attended Duke, and I kept in touch with her over the years. In fact, I had dinner with her just this spring. She was visiting in Wilmington and we went to the DuPont Country Club for dinner.

Q: Did she manage to use her experiences in France in any way?

A: I don't believe she did.

Q: Who else do you remember?

A: Well, there was another girl named Jane Rittenhouse who attended Swarthmore and she was allowed to go to France in her sophomore year. And I have seen her off and on over the years because she became a teacher at Wilmington Friends School. And oh, about a year or so, she came to my apartment and actually she was soliciting funds for Friends School, but I invited her in because I thought it'd be nice to see her again. And she definitely used her skills, because she taught French in Japan, as I understand, for a number of years, and then taught French at Wilmington Friends School for many years.

Q: How about boys, don't you remember any boys?

A: Oh, there was quite a bit about them in my letters home, but none of them have I kept up with over the years. Of course, I went to two of the three reunions, which we held in New York City, and a certain group would usually turn up at these meetings, but I haven't attended some of the . . .

Q: And a certain group that never goes, huh?

A: Yes, the same people maintain their interest.

Q: How many were part of the program?

A: 44 or 45 I believe, and I think they came from 26 different universities or colleges.

Q: How many from Delaware?

A: One.

Q: Uh huh, just yourself. And this was in 1937-38, is that right?
Q Do you remember your trip abroad?

A That's right, um hmm.

Q Do you remember your trip abroad?

A Oh, yes. I mentioned--well, I had remembered that we had a rather bad crossing and I was one of the few that turned up for meals. And on re-reading these letters, I find that one evening I sneaked into first class with someone and saw a movie, and another time explored the ship, climbing various barriers to get around, going into the very bow of the ship. This is before the days of transatlantic air travel. In fact, one very interesting thing to me is the dependence that we had on the fast boat mail. Because I would continually refer to the fact that I was going to close off this letter so that I could get it on the [inaudible ships' names - sounds like "Normandy or the Brannan"] or the Europa . . .

Q When you were writing from France.

A When I was writing from France. Or I would say, "I should get some mail tomorrow. I see that the Normandy is due today." So it was part of our life over there, and of course the people here who were writing to us, to keep track of the mail of the boats so we could get the mail over because of course this was before transatlantic air postage, too.

Q Who were the professors who went with you on this . . .

A Well, I guess our chief chaperone was a lady named Miss Helen Reese, who was very, very nice and very helpful in every way. And the director was a man named George Hocking and he--well, he wasn't as popular as Miss Reese, but he--in fact, he took a two-month vacation during the year, which at the time I seemed to think was rather negligent of his charges, but everything moved along.

Q Was it Miss or Mrs. Reese?

A It was Miss Reese and she was later married.

Q Was she from Delaware, the University of Delaware, or from one of the other schools?

A No, I don't believe she was.

Q She had a rather good background in French and . . .

A Yes, she did, but I don't remember her background.

Q And this gentleman Hocking, was he a teacher at the University of Delaware?

A No. I don't know what his--I really don't recall their backgrounds. But then when we got over there, they had a staff of tutors. We attended courses first at the University of Tours and then at the Sorbonne, University of Paris. And these were lecture courses, and then in both places the University of Delaware hired a building and we had special tutors.

Q Courses that the . . .
A Special courses. At Tours, of course, a great deal of it was to get our French into some sort of shape, and we also had art courses.

Q Now, do you remember much about your life at Tours? How long were you at

A Two months.

Q Did you live with a family?

A Oh, I lived with a marvelous family. They had a little trouble placing me, because I wanted to be alone. In any family I went, I wanted to be on my own because of the language problem. If you have a roommate who speaks English, you just aren't going to speak nothing but French. So I really wanted to be the only English-speaking person wherever I was staying. But this didn't work out in Tour, but I ended up in a fascinating place. The host and hostess were a countess who had come on . . .

Q No less.

A Yes, no less, and she was a lovely lady, a great deal of [inaudible] and white hair, and he was rather small. And they had oh, something like 11 children, and we'd be 17 at table. And there were two other girls from our group there and they were from Bryn Mawr and very intellectual.

Q Was this the family with whom you stayed?

A Yes, at Tours.

Q Then you weren't alone, you were . . .

A No, they couldn't arrange it, so they sent me here, but it turned out all right because the two other girls roomed together and they were as thick as thieves and very intellectual and they didn't pal around with anybody, so . . . and with 17 people at table, there was always plenty of chatter in French. Of course they were fairly good about sticking--well, they spoke French, of course, at the table. But we had marvelous [inaudible] and Madame loved to play bridge and I was a bridge player, so I learned to play bridge in French and enjoyed that very much. And Saturdays we'd take tours to various chateaux.

Q Now, you went on these tours with the university.

A With the group, with the university group.

Q What sort of home was this that you stayed in?

A Well, it was a big large home and it was in the middle of a block with houses--with ground around it. You know, it sort of took up the entire middle of this block and there was a large wooden fence--or gate, actually--that you had to get in to get on the property. And in my re-view--I had remembered going to a dance at the Hotel d'Tours [sp] and
staying late and having trouble getting back into this place. But I didn't remember that I had to actually go into a window because my friends couldn't find a way--I woke them up and they came down and they couldn't unlock the door, so I had to go in through a window.

Q With whom did you go, was it one of the members of the group?

A No, I had been dating a lot of the members of the group and sitting with them on the excursions to the chateaux and in the slang of the day I said, "Oh, there's a dance and Bob hasn't asked me--the rat!" But I went anyway. And I said that--these two other girls that were staying in the house where I was living--they wouldn't go even--they just wouldn't go. But I went. I said other girls that didn't have dates went and they had a good time. And I had a good time 'cause I came home so late I had to climb in.

Q What was the university like?

A The University of Tours? Oh, I really don't remember much about it. I remember Monsieur Cadanler who was a very attractive young Frenchman who was one of our tutors and we were all hoping that we'd have all our courses with him, and I had very uncomplementary remarks to make about one of the other tutors.

Q What were they?

A Oh, I think I said he was very conceited and thought he was very funny and was very boring and wasn't teaching us anything, I felt.

Q What was the town of Tours like then?

A Oh, very quaint. I've always been one to take long walks, and I complained I couldn't find anybody that wanted to walk as far as I did. So I took solitary walks around the town and I described the narrow streets and the quaint character of the town. It's very much a small town.

Q Have you been back?

A No, I haven't, unfortunately.

Q But they prepared you pretty well for your lectures at the Sorbonne.

A We had placement tests and our courses in Tours were based on how we came out in these preliminary tests. And some people who were less well prepared had to really bone up on their basic grammar and we were placed in that way. And some had different courses than others, and of course this went through into our studies in Paris. Some people had to take extra courses, you know, without credit.

Q To prepare them in the language.

A Yes, because the language preparation was not as good. Of course, I had a head start because of my earlier studies.

Q Were there any other courses, cultural courses, that you [inaudible] . . . ?
Oh, not as such. We went on these trips to the chateaux and we—I think we had the same person that took us each time and described them, but he was not nearly as knowledgeable as Monsieur Gertie [sp], who was a charming guide and professor of history of art. And that was my favorite course which I . . .

Q Now, was this at Tours or was this in Paris?

A No, this was in Paris. And he would take us on—oh, around to historical churches and monuments—in fact, when we went to Notre Dame, he had permission to take us into some parts of the building that are normally not accessible to anyone. And I seemed to feel I learned a lot about architecture in terms of—in French terms. And then he took us through the art museums and walked us miles, because he would take us to the Louvre, for instance, and we'd be looking at some period of art, and then he would race us miles off to some completely different era to show us something that would either compare or contrast, and then we'd have to troop back. But he was a marvelous little man. He was about five feet tall and he always wore a gray hamburg and he had marvelous moustaches and always had a very strong aroma of garlic. And he was very—every once in a while he used an English word and . . .

Q Correctly?

A Well, yes. But when he'd get one of the girls in for a conference, he'd always say, "Ah, alone at last!"

Q Did he know what it meant?

A Yes! He wasn't—he was just very friendly. He was not young by any means, but very—I think I enjoyed—well, I know I enjoyed this course of the history of art more than any other course, and I sometimes neglected my other courses to do extra reading and preparation for it.

Q Now, what this gentleman did was in conjunction with the regular course at the Sorbonne, is that right?

A No, this was a special course that was offered through the University of Delaware. It had—as I recall, it didn't have anything to do with the Sorbonne.

Q What other cultural experiences did you have in Paris?

A Well, the Paris—an exposition was on at that time and I made several trips to that. And I went alone one time and then I went another time with other people, and they were so slow that I decided to detach myself from them. I just wanted to see everything I could while I was there and it was about to close.

Q Was this in the center of Paris, the exposition?

A Yes, it was. And there were exhibits from other countries and I don't—it was sort of a fair, you know.
It was a world's fair.

I guess it was sort of a world's fair, because I mentioned things from the Orient. But it seemed to be more European exhibits. In Paris I lived with a very different type person than I did in Tours. She was very bourgeois but interested in cultural things, and it was very fortunate for me that she was, because she--we took a sortie together to concerts and to art exhibits. And of course this helped with my appreciation of those things and also my French, because she was a great chatterer but we'd . . .

Was she alone in this family or . . .

No, she had three children. And she had a son who was a doctor--and his wife I think was also a doctor. While I was over there, they had a child, which was a nice experience. Then she had a son who was in the armed forces at that time and he was quite charming and he hated every minute of it. He got home on leave once or twice. Then there was a son 19 and this turned out to help my French a great deal because come about spring we became quite good friends and went out together and we did various things. But one experience I had that was rather interesting, Madame and I went to a concert and we wore evening dress, but we went by metro. And apparently I was giggling the whole way because I thought it was so preposterous to be in a subway in evening dress. And we attended many plays, and I didn't care for the classical ones, Racine, [sounds like "Bernet"], but I liked some of the modern ones. And apparently their stage settings were very well done. I mentioned that quite often. And we went to the opera. And when we went to the opera, of course, we wore evening dress. And after the opera Mr. Hocking on several occasions took us to the Cafe des la [inaudible] and treated us to a little after-opera . . .

Aperitif?

Well, or whatever you want to call it. Well, I said I was sitting by the door and watched everything go--Coca-Cola, champagne, cheese sandwiches, onion soup, everything go by. Everyone had what they pleased.

You mentioned in the family one of the sons being a soldier. Did you have any contact with the impending war? Any experiences that showed the war coming on?

No, I didn't. I guess I was very--just in my own--and very busy. Oh, we had a very busy schedule because we had a great deal of reading to do, and preparation of our dissertation, which I guess were biweekly. It was a great time [inaudible] . . . because they were very very strict about this composition, much more so I think than in college in the States. And we used to have a conference with one of our tutors. We had two tutors who would go over our--we had to put up a plan first and then they would assist us in getting our thoughts straight. Then we would write the dissertation, and then after it was corrected we would go in, and usually be raked over the coals because we were careless or did not give enough thought or something. And they were very strict.

But was this in association with the Sorbonne or with the university?

No, this was in association with the University of Delaware. We called
it the Institute, and this was a building which was rented by the University of Delaware for the group, and they had several tutors there.

Q Who was the secretary? Who were the people who represented the University of Delaware?

A I really don't know. I think all this responsibility was just delegated to Mr. Hocking and Miss Reese.

Q But did any of the staff or any...

A Well, they headed the staff and then there were the extension persons who--they had a course in drama, and they had a very wispy little ancient lady who was the tutor in that. But I did not have any courses with her, but she looked like she'd blow away, I didn't know how she...

Q [Inaudible]

A How can you tell?

Q Because the light goes on brighter.

A Oh, I see. I don't understand these mechanical things.

Q What about the lectures at the Sorbonne, how did that impress you?

A Well, we went into this large amphitheater and there were several hundred students from various nations. There were Scandanavians, quite a few, English, and it was just a lecture course and we took notes as I recall. Of course one of the terrifying things about the Sorbonne was that when we had examinations, we not only had a written examination, but we had an oral examination, which meant that we sat there with two or three, I don't know which, very distinguished professors and had to answer questions or carry on in French, which of course by the end of the year wasn't too difficult. And I didn't have too much trouble because I really did work hard on associating with French people and speaking as much as I could with them and avoiding--not avoiding the American people because I had friends and we did things together. But I did--I made a lot more progress than people that roomed in pairs. And we took lots of very nice trips, some in conjunction with the history of art and some just expeditions of the group. We'd go by bus. We went to--well, we went to Rance and went to the Champagne [inaudible] and got some free champagne. And in the evening I remember a whole bunch of us went to a sidewalk cafe.

Q Did you have Penrod?

A Pardon?

Q Did you have Penrod? Everyone in my interviews talked about having particular drinks.

A Oh, Pernod. Pernod. Oh, I don't recall, but I don't think I let anything--I didn't pass anything up, I don't believe. But Vouvray was the great thing in Tours--that's the national wine of Tours. And I mentioned we had
the—they would serve still Vouvray with a meal and then sparkling Vouvray, which was somewhat like champagne—I liked it better; I liked the flavor better than champagne.

Q How carefully were you watched, were you chaperoned?

A Well, we had little slips of paper that had to be made out and I was very amused when I was staying with the Countess in Tours. This young man that I was going out with came in one evening by bicycle to play bridge at our place. And apparently it was a terribly, terribly stormy night, so Madame put him up at the house. So it struck me rather funny to send in a slip that the gentleman had called on me at 8:30 in the evening until 8:30 in the morning. And when I got to Paris I was quite worried, because I thought that Madame, being quite bourgeois, would be rather strict. But apparently she would close her eyes, or—we were supposed to be in by 12:45, but I didn't always keep those hours. And apparently she was quite indulgent about it and she would put 12:45 even though it was an hour or so later.

Q She was responsible for you [inaudible].

A Yes, she was responsible for keeping an eye on me, sending in these slips. And we were not supposed to go out with anyone who had not been introduced either—I guess to the person we would live with or perhaps even to Miss Reese, I don't quite remember that. But they did chaperone us, but we were pretty free agents.

Q Did you do much touring beyond the close environs of Paris?

A Well, we took day trips, as I said, to Rance and [inaudible]. And then we had two vacations. Now, the University of Delaware planned bus trips for each of these—Christmas vacation and for the spring vacation. And the Christmas vacation they were going to Germany and I wasn't particularly interested, and I guess I was a little homesick, because I decided to go visit an old friend of the family who was a retired French schoolteacher and was living in Florence. So I took off from Paris alone and a man in the—oh, the university had a man who would help plan trips for individuals. So he planned this trip for me and I went by train to Nice and spent a couple of nights there and then took off for Florence. But he didn't realize that the train connection he planned for me at the border never worked, so I found myself wandering around northern Italy at all hours. And finally I had to change trains in Genoa, and I was in the Pisa station for a while, and I finally got into Florence at 2:30 or 3:00 Christmas morning. So that was quite a trip.

Q You were on your own.

A I was traveling alone. And then on the way back I went by way of Milan, I believe. Then in the spring, the group tour was to Italy, and I decided to take this trip again even though I had—I had seen Florence quite extensively, but I hadn't been to the other cities. So I went on the bus trip and it was of course a lot of fun. And we went to Venice, and it was terribly cold there. We were at Rome at Easter and I went with a friend of mine who was Roman Catholic to St. Peter's Square, and we stood out and saw
the Pope come out to give his blessing. And in Rome we just had summer dresses on and were very comfortable, but then when we went back north, it was very, very cold. We went to Assisi and of course Florence again. And I have a picture I came across not so long ago of myself in a gondola with actually Jane Rittenhouse, whom I mentioned, Lola and her friend Pete. We were all bundled up to our ears because it was so terribly cold.

Q Did you go on the same bus all the way through this trip?

A As I recall we had a big red bus that we went on the whole--the whole busload of us.

Q How about accommodations, were they pleasant?

A I don't remember. We never went first class, but we--well, as a matter of fact, in one hotel I did say that I had to practically move the furniture to open the window, the room was so small. And of course I had a terrible time about baths because the French ladies usually aren't--they watch how much water you use. And I didn't care--at Tours I was with one lady for apparently a few days before I ended up with the Countess, and I didn't care for her, so I was very glad to report that I'd smuck a bath while she was out for the day. But the Countess didn't put any restrictions on bathing, so I thought she was really great. But of course a lot of the group took various tours on their own. I think some of them went skiing on one of the vacations and so forth. We were fairly independent.

Q Did you--other than a trip to Italy, did you do any other touring on your own?

A Well, a girl named Gerrie Worthington from Washington and I, after we were through in Paris, we took a trip together to England and Scotland.

Q This is after the year?

A After--before we came back to the States. And that was quite a wild trip, because we crossed the Channel on the Normandy, which at that time was quite new and I guess the largest steamship. And of course it crossed more to cross the ocean on it, but it didn't cost any more to cross the Channel. So we spent the whole Channel crossing racing around the ship trying to see it. And then when we got off at Plymouth, I had my luggage, but Julia didn't have hers, it was still on the Normandy. So the two of us lived for a week or ten days out of my suitcase. Fortunately we were the same size, and she took the blue clothes and I took the black ones. And we had a marvelous trip to Scotland. We went to the Trossachs and just loved Edinburgh. And we didn't care too much for London--of course were were so used to Paris and just knew our way around it so well, we said we knew it like you knew the inside of your pocket, and London was so huge and we didn't know anyone there, and it left us rather cold. But we loved the Scotland trip.

Q What do you think you gained from this whole experience?

A Well, I had a marvelous time, just absolutely marvelous. I mean, each day was a new adventure, practically. And I worked hard.

Q What effect do you think it had on your life?
Oh, I don't know that it had any special ...

Any different outlook on things or did--of course we'll talk a little later about your subsequent career, but do you think this changed the course of your life in any way?

No, it didn't, because I didn't really use my language skills very much because after I came back from France I continued my studies at Women's College and graduated there. And then since I hadn't taken education courses, I wasn't employable, so I went to a local business school and took shorthand and typing. And then in October I went to the DuPont Company and applied for a job. They told me that I would have to get better shorthand and training--told me to go back to school, but they did call me in in a day or two for an interview with one of the export departments, and they gave me a job as a translator because I had the French and German. And in my senior year, since I was living in Wilmington, I took a night course in Italian at Wilmington High School. And fortunately my professor, who was a young man, was employed just very close to where I was employed in the DuPont Company. So when I got an Italian letter, if I got stuck I could always get help.

From your teacher.

Yes. He also--when I was in France, I was introduced to a young French girl named Gabby Moulier [sp], and she was to be an exchange student at Women's College the following year. So we met in Paris and then she stayed at my home upon occasion, and she lived down at Newark, but she would spend weekends with me and we were quite friendly. And she was dating this Raul Pantalone and ... .

Who was teaching Italian.

Who was employed with the DuPont Company and teaching this night course on the side. So--and they trained me in secretarial skills. I'd fill in for people and--so about six months later, one of the men needed a new secretary, his secretary was leaving, so he said he thought he'd give a college girl a chance. It so happened I knew him slightly, he was a friend of a friend of my mother's. So he employed me and it worked out fine. And of course that was the end of my using language, but I--so I worked for him for about two and a half years. Of course, by this time the war was in full swing and Wilmington was very dull, so I decided to join the Navy. So I got a probationary commission and trained for 28 days and went to ... .

At Smith?

At Smith, and went to Washington where I was for a few years in the communications office of Naval Intelligence. And an interesting sidelight which seems to interest people at this time is that one of my--one of my fellow officers who was in the same office and had the same duties that I had at that time was Jim Pike, who later was well known as Bishop James Pike. At that time he was a lawyer, and while we were down there he went to the seminary and became an Episcopal priest and then went on to be bishop. I saw him subsequently a couple of times and he was very pleasant
and friendly.

Q You missed something else in your early discussions--your meeting the Duke of Windsor.

A Oh! Oh, yes, I . . .

Q Since you're talking about well-known personalities.

A Well, I didn't meet him, but I saw him up close, you might say. One of the girls in our group very tragically came down with polio, which at that time we called infantile paralysis, while we were in Tours, and she was taken to the American hospital At [sounds like "Nahee"], a suburb of Paris--quite close to Paris, because I walked there on one occasion. And she was in the hospital for some time and then was brought back to the States--she came from the Midwest, and of course at that time that was sort of the focal point of this disease, I believe. Unfortunately, she never walked again. She came to a reunion on crutches. She was a brilliant girl and became a lawyer and I believe worked for the government. But on one occasion when we went out to the American hospital to see her, people had said that the Duke of Windsor had been there and that his car had driven off, but this was just a blind, because we saw him in the hall. He had gone there for a steam bath, which apparently he did from--on occasion. And then of course not many people nowadays would remember Leslie Howard, the English actor who played in Gone with the Wind, but I saw him . . .

Q I remember him in the Scarlet Pimpernel.

A Oh, the Scarlet Pimpernel, oh, that was marvelous. But I saw him at an art exhibit one time. But we went--we did a great deal of going to museums, and as I say, the theater and the opera. And I did quite a bit of walking about, seeing the city.

Q Now, going back again to your career in the Navy, you were a Wave, right?

A Yes. Right. One of the very first.

Q O.K. What did you do after the Navy?

A Well, somewhere along the line I married a fellow that I knew--that I'd known--he actually came from this little town where I was born. And I had relatives there and I had seen him on occasion, and he had graduated from Swarthmore, and I had seen him there. And he had graduated from Harvard Law School and he was in the Army. And so sometime when he came home from the Aleutians on leave we were married, and we spent a few vacations together. So after he got out of the service, I got out of the service. And we went to work together. And he'd always said that now that he'd seen what the world was like outside of the coal regions, he'd never go back. But of course the economics sort of--you sort of have to go where you can get it. So he said, "Well, we won't live in Minersville, but we'll live in Pottsville." Well, Pottsville is a little better than Minersville, but not much. So that didn't last very long. So I came back to Wilmington and went back to work for the DuPont Company for a while.
And then I got bored again, so I went to New York and got a job up there as a private secretary to a vice president and sales manager of a fabric company, which of course since then ... 

Q Did you live in New York City?

A I lived in New York City, I lived in the Hotel George Washington at 23rd and Lexington, and I worked at 1071 Avenue of the Americas, it had just been renamed, overlooking Bryant Park. And I had the distinction of being one of the first ladies, or girls, to wear "the new look," which is very pertinent at the moment as they're trying to start something like this again. Because I worked for the fabric company and they had a sample dress made up in some fabric and it was the long skirt ... 

Q What year was this?

A Well, this was in '48, I guess. That's when the so-called "new look" came in, the long skirts again, because we'd worn short skirts during the war. So they gave me this little dress and asked me if I would wear it for a few days. So I'd never been really terribly fashion conscious, but--I mean I've never gone in overboard on fashion--but this is one time when I walked down 5th Avenue and people would look at what I wore, because it was avant-garde at that time. But the first weekend that I came to Wilmington from New York, I met this Wilmington man who was working in Wilmington. So after six months in New York I came back to Wilmington and was married to him. He was a chemist with the DuPont Company.

Q That look is coming back.

A Yes. Well, I hope not. I hope not. My daughter says she just won't wear it, and a lot of people say they won't wear it. But meanwhile, I had gone back to the Philadelphia Navy Yard for two-weeks duty somewhere along the line, and as a result of this I had applied for a job with the C.I.A. So they had--even though I had been thoroughly investigated by naval intelligence, of course C.I.A. had to do the whole thing over again. So by the time I got the job, I was not only married but pregnant. But I did work for the C.I.A. for Captain Hudson [sounds like "Droveau"] for a few months. And our offices were down in the old Pennsylvania Railroad building, which was a miserable place, but it was a very pleasant job. So I gave up that job when I had my daughter, and that's a few years ago since she's now 21. And she's working now. She wasn't the student that her mother was--of course her mother didn't push her like her grandmother pushed her mother, either.

Q No junior year abroad, huh?

A No, she went to the University of Delaware for one semester, and then she said she was going to do what she really wanted to do, which was go to Goldey Beacom, and she went for the complete course and now has a nice job at the Wilmington Trust Company, and she's engaged to be married.

Q Well, I want to thank you very much, Mrs. McCumber. I think I've taken enough of your time.

[END OF INTERVIEW]