

*GOVERNOR'S MANSION
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT*

Interview

with

Governor Robert E. McNair
and Mrs. Josephine McNair

Interviewer:

George Terry

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Lace House, Columbia, S.C.

Topics:

Former Governor and Mrs. McNair discuss life in the Governor's Mansion, 1966 to 1971.

Transcriber:

Deanna Moore

[Begin Tape 1, Side 1]

Terry: We are very pleased to have with us today Governor McNair and Mrs. McNair, our former First Lady, who occupied the Governor's Mansion for over six years. What was it like when you first walked in the door the first day?

Gov. McNair: I defer to you on that one.

Mrs. McNair: Well, it was overwhelming. It was so sudden and there were just so many things that needed to be done, and there wasn't an opportunity to talk to the one that had just left to find out a lot of things. [After the death of U.S. Senator Olin Johnston, Gov. Donald Russell stepped down and was succeeded by Lt. Gov. McNair. Russell was then immediately appointed by McNair to the U.S. Senate.]

So I just got me a cookbook, and got me an etiquette book, and start[ed] trying to put it together, and got lots of help from friends outside that helped me know how to...I'd never had a real formal dinner party. It was a lot to be done with a very little bit there.

Terry: It was pretty overwhelming, wasn't it?

Mrs. McNair: Very. With the four children, too. They were going to high school and going to college and their whole life had just been turned upside down and they were very uneasy. A little bit different, I think, if you run and you've got time to think about it. It was different when we ran for it [for reelection in 1968] because the kids got into it so much.

But just like overnight, this happened. They didn't really have any opportunity to really adjust to it.

Terry: Did they have to change schools?

Mrs. McNair: Yes.

Gov. McNair: Well, with the transition with Governor Russell, I reckon we had anticipation, but we really had, officially, about twelve hours of notice. And it was at the end of school, it was in April, and we did work out an arrangement with Mrs. Russell, who had children in school, they [the Russells] would stay on in the Mansion until school was out, and Josephine and the children would stay in Allendale until school was out, and then we would make the move [into residence in the Mansion]. So during that period, I stayed in an apartment in the Wade Hampton Hotel and commuted back and forth. She [Mrs. McNair] had to commute also, for a lot of functions.

Mrs. McNair: Well, Mrs. Russell really just went ahead and packed up and moved out. So I was coming up here for things that she had scheduled, like teas and tours and that kind of stuff, and I was getting calls from [Director of General Services] Furman McEachern, and “You need to come up and we need to talk what we’re going to do, and who’s going [to] have what rooms [in the Mansion],” so that we could get that fixed up. The funniest thing, they asked, “And which room will be yours and which one will be the Governor’s?” and I said, “We’ll have a room together,” and they said, “Oh, no, the Governor has a separate room.” [laughter] And I said, “Not here. Not with us.” [more laughter]

Terry: At that point in time, the architecture was still pretty much the way it was before the Civil War. But if I’m not mistaken, didn’t you all put in a new dining room?

Mrs. McNair: No...

Terry: Who did that?

Mrs. McNair: ... it wasn’t done.

Gov. McNair: [Governor Ernest F.] Hollings added the little family dining room to the back. And then, there was the upstairs [dining area] that Josephine had put in for the children, so that they would have a place, upstairs over the kitchen.

Terry: I read a newspaper article years ago [stating that] when Strom Thurmond went into the Governor's Mansion, he claimed that there was no heating and air conditioning in the building at all, and wanted that installed. How were the conditions in terms of environment and things of this sort?

Mrs. McNair: They were fine, we had no problems with that. I think [Governor James F.] Byrnes had put in the elevator. There were no problems with it being too hot or too cold. It was mainly the usable things, like linens and all kinds of things for the kitchen, and that kind of stuff. There was adequate furniture there, that we could work around.

Terry: Tell me about some of your memories of the house.

Mrs. McNair: Oh my goodness, that'd take days, weeks, months.

Gov. McNair: How about the help?

Mrs. McNair: All the help came from the penitentiary. They had to be trained. They had to be dressed. I'd never had anything like that in my life, so I was having to holler for help getting it all put together. Furman McEachern would call me and say, "Now tell me what you need in this room and that room."

You know what amazed me, that the [state's textile] mills did not furnish the Mansion with towels and sheets, and all of the blankets, and that kind of stuff. But I went up in a station wagon and got them to give us some, to get it started, in that way. But everything was adequate, as far as beds and chairs and all like that.

There wasn't any help that was, you know...I had to train them all. And that took a while. With a lot of riding back and forth from Allendale. We had said we would not move in until August, and let the children enjoy Allendale. But that didn't work. It was so much on me, coming back and forth, that I just said, "Y'all, we're moving in." So after they all graduated, we packed up and moved in.

Terry: Tell me a little bit about the adjustment, because I am sure it was an adjustment for your children, probably more than for the both of you all.

Mrs. McNair: The main thing was that Mrs. Russell had scheduled any group of children, school children or adults, garden clubs and all, that wanted to come through on a tour. I didn't know that I could *not* do that, so, I mean, every day—we averaged three thousand a week, coming through the Mansion just to see it. And I had nobody helping me at that time, so I would have to do the tours and point out things that I thought would be of interest to them.

Terry: You mean there wasn't an assistant?

Mrs. McNair: No. I was the first First Lady to have a secretary. There was none till then. I just called him [Gov. McNair] one day and I just said, "I can't do it. I cannot take care of the kids, and see all these people that are coming and everything else." And he said, "You need to get some help."

Gov. McNair: The first budget problem I had to be confronted with, because in that day the budget was small, but she had to have somebody help her. And [we] were able to find Clara Duncan, who is really a, what do you call it, [flower?] judge and all, who really added a lot to it. We knew her, and were friends of the family.

Mrs. McNair: The first thing [event] we had, I just picked up the phone and called the florist and said, "I need a real pretty, big arrangement for the piano, because I'm having a tour today." And, when the bill came, it was a hundred dollars for that, and Bob said, "Forget it, you've got to get it some other way." [laughter] So Clara was great help for that. And [head butler] Willie used to kid her all the time, "You all not going to leave any magnolias here for these others to cut. You all be cutting it all."

Terry: You were talking, Mrs. McNair, about the schedule, and the fact that the schedule was pretty much intact for the first several months. What was the first event that you scheduled?

Mrs. McNair: I was getting called into Allendale from people here, and Mrs. [J. Rion] McKissick, her husband was president of [the University of South] Carolina, she was a dear friend of mine. And she called up and said, "I've got a group of girls I want to bring over there." And so she said she wanted it, and I did it. The one rule I made, I was going to speak to everybody that came through there, particularly the children. So I was down there, speaking to them, every time they all came through. And he [Gov. McNair] did that in his office an awful lot, too.

She [Mrs. McKissick] was very important in my life, from the days that the University was so small. I wasn't president of the student body, but of the affairs at Carolina, and I'd meet with her, and with him, a lot. That door was always open. Any time you wanted to go see them, you'd just go. I was very close to her, and continued that on up to her death.

Gov. McNair: To clarify one thing, George, you're talking about two Willies. There was Willie Byrd, with Mr. Byrnes, and there was Willie that was the first person that she had on the staff at the Mansion, that had to be trained, and is still there and just retiring.

Mrs. McNair: He came in to speak to me.

Terry: Yes, he's here. Did you see him?

Gov. McNair: No, I didn't see him. One of the things, too, with Mrs. Russell, when they moved in, they had a lot of stuff that belonged to them, their china, and their staff, the chef and all that they had had. So they brought all of those with them...

Mrs. McNair: Even chandeliers.

Gov. McNair: ...including a couple of chandeliers. So when they left, of course they took that with them. That was where Josephine was faced with a dinner party, the first one, not having adequate...and having to do some borrowing and do some quick, from friends around Columbia. And then another budget problem was when she came in and said, "I have to have some china," and she pulled a good one on that. She went in to see Senator [Edgar] Brown...

Mrs. McNair: I got permission from you to go.

Gov. McNair: ...a family friend, and her mother's friend, where she grew up in Barnwell. And Senator Brown and Senator [Spot] Mozingo and others got together and gave her an appropriation to go get some china and have things like that, with Jack Scoville. [laughter] So it was an interesting time.

Terry: Governor, that was one of the things I wanted to ask about. Can you all tell me a little bit about the role Jack Scoville had...

Gov. McNair: Both of us could, because he played a role in both places.

Mrs. McNair: He was on board when I got there, he already was helping with people in the Mansion and all, and then, of course, I got into this, "What am I going to do about trying to get things for this Mansion?" There was just nothing there, and furniture, and all kinds of different things. And so I talked to Jack about it. Maybe Bob gave me the first suggestion that we form a Governor's Mansion Committee. Bob said, "And get you a chairman out of each county, and let that chairman see what's out there that can be brought up, that is historical and all." So we got them going, but I had to put it together. I had to get a lady head of it, and that's when Lilla Hoefler was to be the chairman of the whole group and then we got a chairman of every county.

Gov. McNair: But you had one from each Congressional district.

Terry: And that was called the Mansion Commission?

[The Governor's Mansion Commission was created in 1966 "to promote and cultivate the embellishment and ornamentation of the Governor's Mansion through the acquisition by loan or gift of articles of historical significance which would be appropriate to its elegance and grace." It consisted of representatives of each Congressional District plus a chair and one member at large, each appointed by the Governor. Mrs. Jack Scoville of Columbia represented the 2nd District.]

Gov. McNair: Once she got started with it, that's when I had started using the executive order, which nobody had previously used extensively. So I told her, if she'd get it together, then I'd create a Mansion Commission by executive order, so that it would have more official responsibilities and authority to supervise and help, and it would have some official authority for people who had furniture, furnishings, paintings, about South Carolinians, former Governors and all, that would be willing to loan or give things to the Mansion. Following that, the legislature then came along and made it into an official body.

Mrs. McNair: They would find these people and then they would put together a little slide show and Lilla and myself would go, and Jack, if he could go. I'd go to Allendale County and we would show them these slides, that we need something for here, a table like this, or we need something like this over here. Then they could [say], you know, "In our attic, I've got something like that," or "I've got this chair over here that I really don't need." And that's how we started getting things in, was having to break it down. But Lilla and I had to go. I mean, we went everywhere in South Carolina, and did this little slide show. And one time she said, "What are you going to do if this thing doesn't work this time? You know, these slides could be giving out or something." And I said, "Well, I really don't know either." And she said, "Well, we'll have to do something." So one time, she was trying to set it all up, and it wouldn't go. And she came up to me and said, "Do you want to sing or dance?" [laughter]

But we just had a real good time with it and I enjoyed meeting everybody throughout the state. Before we went out of office, we had every lady from every county that had been helping with the Mansion to come.

Terry: Was this house, the Lace House, part of the complex then?

Mrs. McNair: Yes, it's got a story behind it, too. The dining room was not adequate over there [at the Mansion]. You just couldn't have as big a crowd as you wanted to have, so I went back to [Speaker Sol] Blatt and Brown, the Senator and House Speaker...

Terry: The one-two punch.

Mrs. McNair: ...and said, "If you could give me some money, then I can add a dining room on, where that beautiful big old tree is, take it down and make the dining room out of that." So they had it appropriated. Well, [Ham?] went up in arms that I was going to cut that tree. No way was I going to cut that tree. And so I thought, well, what in the world am I going to do now?

Then Jennie Dreher, who was very active in Columbia, came up one day to me and said, "The Lace House is going up for sale, and we are very worried about the fact that a filling station could come up there." You know, anything could happen, anybody could buy it, and put it into what they wanted to. And so I went back to the legislature and asked them, could I take that money they had approved for a dining room and buy the Lace House? And they approved it. So that's how we got this house.

Terry: That's incredible.

Mrs. McNair: It really was.

Terry: And a great treasure, with the [Caldwell-]Boylston House next door now.

Gov. McNair: That was already owned by the Historic Columbia Foundation, that Jennie was then head of. That made the complex.

Mrs. McNair: She was nice enough to hold on to this for me, to get the money worked out.

Gov. McNair: They literally acquired it, and held it, until we could get the funds.

Terry: What do you think about all the fences now, and all the security? When I used to come around [while working with Mrs. Edwards on the first book], there was nothing. There was a state patrolman or somebody out front, in the little box [guard house by the gate], but that was it.

Mrs. McNair: Well, we didn't even have that, when we were here.

Gov. McNair: When we came, there wasn't that. There was actually no security. We only had the people from the Department of Corrections as help. And when they went in at night, then we had to answer the telephone. And, you remember, that period got to be quite active during the '60s, with all the various things that were going on. Finally, we did have the little house out front, and Chief Strom [J.P. "Pete" Strom, head of the State Law Enforcement Division] assigned two students at the university, who were interns at SLED, to be our security at night. And we put in a system where, at a certain time, we could flip the switch and the phone would be answered out at the SLED headquarters. And if it was somebody I needed to talk to, they could flip it back to us, and tell who it was. But that was our original security, flipping the telephone.

Mrs. McNair: And no gates to be locked.

Gov. McNair: No, the gates were never locked.

Mrs. McNair: And there was a door, you know, when you opened that glass door, the other door was nothing but a screen door. And the doorbell rang and rang one night, and Bob went downstairs and threw the door open. And there's nothing between him and that screen door, but he happened to a person—do you want to tell him, or not?

Gov. McNair: This is a good story. He happened to be a little inebriated, [laughter] and he was looking for his friend, Bob, the governor, because if the police got him they'd lock him up. He asked me who I was, and I said, "Well, I'm the Governor's aide." He said, "Well, I just need him and if I could find him..." He was still leaning on the doorbell. And I said, "Well, if you'd wait a minute, let me see if I can get him." So I went back and flipped that switch and got SLED and I said, "Guess what I've got at my front door?" And I told them what it was.

Well, within, it seemed like, five minutes, [there] must have been five city police cars with the lights blinking and everything, coming up. I won't use the language he used when he saw the police get out of the car, but it was not very kind or complimentary, because he knew where he was going—back to jail. [laughter] But we never had a lot of security. We had those two young fellows, and then they assigned a state trooper for me, Chief Strom [assigned] one SLED agent. They rotated.

Mrs. McNair: They gave me one, too.

Gov. McNair: And then they gave her a state trooper, who by the way was Alton Morris, who ultimately became colonel of the Highway Patrol. I laughed and said you could tell where the power was. My former trooper became Sergeant of Arms of the Senate, and hers became the colonel of the Patrol.

Terry: I followed behind you going to the football games once in a while, and I'd always see him stop, you know these stops, he knows every state patrol man in the state, I think. Because these were obviously old friends of yours, who had worked for you, and you were always very kind enough to stop and...

Gov. McNair: During that period of time, the Patrol wasn't that large, and SLED wasn't that large, and you knew them.

Mrs. McNair: We had a Christmas party every year for them.

Terry: Oh, did you?

Gov. McNair: We started the system of having a dinner for all the constitutional officers and their wives, and then we had the agents and department heads, and we had all of SLED. We would have a drop-in for all of SLED, because they meant so much to us.

Mrs. McNair: Let me tell you something, we were on our way to a football game, and what they would do, see, they would bring a motorcycle cop, and take us at the last minute in that long limousine with the siren going and everything. And Bob's down in the foot, and I said, "What are you doing way down there?" And he said, "All these people out here are my friends, and I don't want any of them [to] think I'm in this big old car, going in at the last minute." And I said, "Well, they think I'm in here all by myself." [laughter] It bothered him.

Gov. McNair: That was the only time, much, we used it [the limousine], because, really, I had a thing about getting around in... So, with the state trooper, he used a black Plymouth. He picked me up in the mornings and that's what we would travel in. And when they'd swap off, I'd ride with the SLED agent, George Fender. Harry Cocker was my trooper and George Fender was the SLED agent. And I'd ride with them in their automobile when we'd travel around the state and to the offices, unless it was an official visit.

Mrs. McNair: It was real funny because that's the way he felt. Morris would take me, most of the time, in a car and not [the limousine]. But every time the children had someone come over and spend the night, the only thing they wanted to do was ride in that limousine. [laughter]

Terry: You both were such great ambassadors in terms of economic development. Can you talk a little bit about that? Because I'm sure the house was probably transformed in some ways because of that need to entertain foreign visitors and people from around the country.

Gov. McNair: Well, that really had started earlier with others. Governor Hollings, of course, was one who traveled a great deal, and then with Mr. [Donald] Russell for two years. And then I came along and put a lot of emphasis [on development], and fortunately, came in at a time when the move to encourage foreign industry was coming in, because the federal government started what they called the reverse investment program, encouraging companies in Germany and Japan, where our money and our resources and technology had helped them develop, and they were then exporting a lot of their stuff here. The federal government started a program to encourage them to build facilities and invest in America. We were lucky enough to be one of the states in the forefront of that, early on, and we took several trips. So we were constantly entertaining visiting dignitaries, and foreign industry people particularly, and corporate executives. The first time, I think, the ambassador of Japan had ever visited the south, came down and spent a weekend with us with his daughter...

Mrs. McNair: And wife.

Gov. McNair: ...and wife and daughter, and had a very nice visit here. That was when we were having all the trade problems. And had a chance to visit with some of the business leaders, textile executives and all.

Mrs. McNair: That lady and that daughter didn't want to do anything but shop. You should have seen me trying to get them in these stores down here with nobody much in there. If something had happened, I don't know what in the world I would have done.

Gov. McNair: They didn't have the shopping malls, much. That was in the early stages of redevelopment of Japan.

Terry: Did you have pets at the house?

Mrs. McNair: One of our daughters, next to the youngest one, had a Persian cat that we had in Allendale. When we drove up into the [Mansion] yard, when we moved here from Allendale, we were in a station wagon. All of the children were in there, and this maid that had helped in Allendale, and the cat. And when we opened the door, the cat got away. Well, here were all these people from around here, the ministers and all the people in this neighborhood, welcoming us, and the camera was here and everything. And that child fell in my arms just sobbing over this cat. Lots of pictures were taken. What else were they going to take except that? [laughter] But two days later, Bob was coming home and saw the cat sitting on the porch.

Gov. McNair: On the Boylston House steps.

Mrs. McNair: And Corinne and I went over there, trying to get it. It was the funniest thing with the doorman holding the umbrella over us as we ran to find the cat. And we did get the cat, and it lived there for about five years, didn't it, Bob?

Gov. McNair: That got a lot of publicity, the missing cat. In fact, the cat generated a little book. [laughter] About Fluff the cat.

Mrs. McNair: Little accidents—we shut her in a closet for a couple of days, couldn't find her. But she was all right. The closet wasn't, but she was. When she died, we had a big funeral. Buried on the edge of Columbia.

Terry: The pool house, didn't that used to be a stable, where the penitentiary folks...?

Mrs. McNair: No. The stable was where the penitentiary people stayed, the trustees. They stayed in the house. But we left a pool in our yard in Allendale. And [when] we came up here, it was summer, and the first thing I knew I was looking for [daughters] Corinne and Claudia. They were in the bathroom swimming. [laughter] And I said, "Oh, Bob, we've got to have a pool, we've got to do that." So we got the penitentiary [to] help build that pool.

Gov. McNair: This is the ingenuity of somebody. She went to [State Director of the Department of Corrections] Ellis MacDougal at that time about it, and Dr. William Hall, Bill Hall, Department of Corrections [Mental Health]. They were tearing down the wall over at the Mental Institution. So he gave her the brick. And Gus Graydon or Grantham Davis, one of them, got one of the pool people to give us somebody to supervise, at no cost. And prison labor built the pool, the pool house, and all of that, and it didn't really cost anything, because all the material was given.

Mrs. McNair: And that was when Jack Scoville had that gate done, and unbeknown to us, it has Bob's initials on the handle. It's McN. [laughter]

Gov. McNair: Mrs. Russell had done the garden, and this was added on to it so that it all conformed. One of my funniest experiences was—I never got in the pool much, but on a Saturday afternoon, I got in there and was soaking up a little water and relaxing in it. And you know how you can tell when, you have a sense, that someone is looking at you. And I happened to look and the bricks were laid with the cracks in it, the way it's done out there. And I bet there were a hundred little eyes of children that had come by, and of course the place was open, so they'd come in and they were peeping through the crack in the brick. So that's the last time I think I went in the pool [laughter] other than in the evening.

Terry: The photos I've seen of the grounds very early, like the 1910s, '15s, '30s, looked like a mess. In fact, they had vegetable gardens out there. Were there any changes in that when...?

Mrs. McNair: There was nothing like that, there. We got them, at the penitentiary, to plant gardens, where we could get flowers and we could get . . .

Gov. McNair: Rose garden.

Mrs. McNair: ...vegetables and things like that. Of course, we couldn't get it otherwise. So that's how that was started.

Gov. McNair: But it was changed, depending on the whims of the governor. Some of them had a putting green, with the golfers, and somebody else would come in, take it out. We eliminated most of those things.

Terry: You know, Governor, the one thing that I remember about those early photos was how rough the grounds looked. Quite different now.

Gov. McNair: When we got there, they were in good shape. Again, Mrs. Russell had the landscape architect come in. I think, really, the one who did work for Mr. [Roger] Milliken, up in Spartanburg, and under his auspices...

Mrs. McNair: And at Carolina too, Bob. Didn't he do something at the...?

Gov. McNair: ...and at the university. Very prominent. World famous. Had done a lot of the work on the grounds. So what we had to do was simply...Josephine got them to plant a rose garden and things of that nature. And the pool house took up a lot of the area.

Terry: What do you all want to talk about, in terms of your life [in the Mansion]?

Gov. McNair: I think the interesting thing was her idea of getting furniture and objects of historical significance in the Mansion so that it, in effect, was a sort of living

museum, for the children coming through and all, and reaching out to families of former governors to get them to give things like a sofa, or a chair, or a chandelier, really nice things. And reaching out to people like [Melby Burton?], in Charleston, and Jack Craft here, and getting them to loan paintings of people like Rutledge and others to us for the Governor's office, but particularly for the Mansion. And it became something of real historic significance to people coming through, and that was really her idea. And getting this [the Lace House], to be a guest house, and for some entertainment, to take the pressure off of there [the Mansion].

I don't want to take away from anybody, but she really tried to mall this in [the Mansion complex], and went to the city. When Lester Bates was mayor, a very dear friend, and Carey Barnett was City Manager, I'd had them close Senate Street so that we could do the capital complex. The feeling was, we better not try to close another street, and wasn't able to get the street done. But it was all part of her original vision, to have this in a complex. And we commend those who followed through on that and getting it where it is today.

Mrs. McNair: Well, I was always so amazed...

Terry: Excuse me. I was just asking Mrs. McNair before you came, when was the last time you went over there? If you have about five minutes, it's all gutted...

Mrs. McNair: Yes, I know.

Terry: But I thought you would like to go over there. It could be interesting.

Gov. McNair: I don't think Josephine's been in it...

Mrs. McNair: No, I haven't. I was telling him the last time I was there was one Christmas. I rode by and looked at the back of it one day. But that's just my heart they're tearing down over there, it really is.

Terry: After they gutted it, you could really tell how unstable a lot of the brick work was and things like that.

Mrs. McNair: They debated a long time with Mrs. Russell, when she went in, about not using this as a mansion, and finding a house out in town somewhere.

Gov. McNair: There was debate over the years. I came to the legislature in 1950-1951, and when Governor [George Bell] Timmerman was going in, there was a problem with termites and all. And the ceiling over the living room was a little unstable. There was some discussion then, I've forgotten which was the house, several of the big houses out in Forest Acres and that area, about acquiring one of them and moving out there. But it had sort of become...

Terry: It is a museum now.

Gov. McNair: The governor's house. I think we were there when it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, weren't we?

Terry: And doesn't it make us look good, to have that type of tradition of...

Gov. McNair: Well, the architecture always amazed people when they visited, and the history of it and all. Well, you have to recognize this was a proprietary school originally, for the Citadel, so the architecture is very similar to the Citadel. And across the street, you'll remember the building over there?

Terry: The arts center.

Gov. McNair: It was similar to this.

Terry: Yes. It's interesting, when I go back through my notes from the first history, I've noticed that this was not the best part of town either. And for you all not to have the security—you know one governor's son was mugged right down the street here.

Mrs. McNair: One of the things we had to work with, and the city did it for us, but we had to find a school for our children to go to. Well, three of them.

Gov. McNair: School board too.

Mrs. McNair: And the school board took it over. But they had to be taken to school. That was fine. They wouldn't go in anything other than a station wagon. The driver and the lady that took care of them stayed a block away, and let them walk the rest of the way. They didn't want to go to school in a car. I don't know how everybody was going to think they walked, but anyway, that was one of the things they were not going to do.

It was good, it really was, we have wonderful memories and wonderful fun over there, lots with our friends from Allendale, as well as all the ones that we got so close to. The Mansion Commission, that was statewide. The last meeting that we had, I had everybody come that had done anything for us at the Mansion. It's registered, if it's given or on loan, because people were, they were scared at first.

Gov. McNair: Well, there was really no inventory.

Mrs. McNair: No.

Gov. McNair: And everything, when it was inventoried, documented, some of it's gifts, some of it's [a] loan, and all of that had to be documented and preserved because, as she said, some of the people were a little concerned.

Terry: [Governor] Cole Blease reportedly took everything out of the building. [Governor Richard] Manning was not worried about it anyway, because he didn't want anything that Cole Blease had. [laughter]

Gov. McNair: Well, I think that was true with a lot of switch overs in the early days. But it was a very livable place, and the family quarters upstairs were very comfortable. The downstairs were public areas, we considered, and they were open to tours. But the family facilities were very comfortable and very nice.

Mrs. McNair: I spoke to every child that came through. And he came from the office when we had the international students come in, once a year. One time, we had to leave, going somewhere, and the line was wrapped all the way around [the Mansion].

Gov. McNair: That was one of the early ones. We started that, entertaining the international students.

Mrs. McNair: From all over the state.

Terry: I think the testament to the livability of the building—no first family, except for Gladys Johnston [Mrs. Olin D.] , has ever declined the invitation to talk about their life at the Mansion. It goes to and fro in terms of [political] parties and differences. I think it's wonderful that good people like you are willing to give up your time to basically reminisce about the Governor's Mansion.

Mrs. McNair: We love doing it because we loved those years. We had a wonderful time during those years and had made so many friends all over the United States. It was great, the children loved it too, particularly when [daughter] Robin got the bed out of *Gone With the Wind* [laughter]. She thought she was hot stuff, being able to have that bed.

Gov. McNair: That was the thing, because the community cooperated. We were able to find the Middleton bed, and it cost money. So Josephine goes to Bob Davis and the other business leaders. They raised the money to pay for it. That was before the foundation was created by Ann Edwards and all.

Mrs. McNair: We didn't have any money. After the Rileys went in, we were out there looking at the fountain one day, and she [Mrs. Riley] said, "You know, I just don't know what to do with all this money I've got [in the Foundation account]." We had begged...! "We didn't have two nickels to rub together, and you have so much you don't know what to do with it."

Terry: Thank you all.

[Interview ends]