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Frances Wanless Memoir

W187. Wanless, Frances (1925-1984)

Interview and memoir

1 tape, 90 mins., 26 pp.

Wanless discusses rural life in central Illinois during WWII: family and rural community in Pleasant Plains, work, war industries, rationing, soldiers stationed in Springfield, and personal observations.

Interview by John Cockrell, 1981

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Preface

This manuscript is the product of a tape recorded interview conducted by John Cockrell for the Oral History Office on October 22, 1981. Linda Jett transcribed the tapes and Chester Rhodes edited the transcript.

Frances Wanless was born on February 4, 1925 in Pleasant Plains, Illinois. In this memoir she discusses the effect World War II had on the community.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Frances Wanless, Springfield, Illinois, October 22, 1981.

John Cockrell, Interviewer.

Q: I think I'll start out by saying that Francis Wanless is my mother. From here on I'll call you Mom. All right?

A: That's okay.

Q: Mom, I'd like to first start out with some of your personal background and your family background. Could you tell me the date of your birth?

A: February 4, 1925.

Q: And where were you born?

A: Pleasant Plains, Illinois.

Q: That's a farming community, right?

A: That's right.

Q: Were you born in the town?

A: Yes.

Q: And what were your parent's names?

A: John and Anna Humphriess.

Q: And did you have any brothers and sisters that are older than you?

A: Yes, two sisters.

Q: Two sisters. What were their names?

A: Marie and Ruby.

Q: And approximately how old were they when you were born?

A: Ruby was 19 months and Marie was probably . . . what, four? Because we were all close together.

Q: Four years old?

A: Well, she was probably around two when Ruby was born, so. . . .

Q: All right. Can you tell me what your earliest childhood memory is?

A: Well, I say it was when I took a train trip to Mt. Vernon to visit my grandmother who was very ill. My mother don't think I can remember it because she thinks I was too young, but I'm sure I do. Grandma was in bed sick and she asked me to kiss her before we left and I remember seeing her there. I remember the ride on the train with the little paper cups that we get a drink out of, you know, and I remember that because I wanted a drink every few minutes. (laughter) And I think that's probably the most outstanding thing you know, early, that I can remember.

Q: How old do you think you were then?

A: I was probably two and a half.

Q: What was your grandmother's name?

A: Emma Austin.

Q: Did you live your childhood in the town of Pleasant Plains?

A: The biggest part of it was in the country. I don't remember living in town when I was a child because they moved to the country before I got old enough to remember. But always around the area of Pleasant Plains.

Q: Living in the country, was your father a farmer?

A: He was a tenant farmer, you know, just worked by the month in the summer months and then his employer also had a coal mine. And then when he got through with the farm, then he worked at the coal mine, which is no longer--Happy Holler Coal Mine.

Q: Did you live in the same house most of the time as a child?

A: I can only remember living in two houses. When there was more children come along, why, and my granddad moved in with us and a small house wasn't big enough, so we went down the road about a block and paid eight dollars a month rent for a bigger house. And then when Dad didn't feel like he could afford it, we moved back to the little house and Grandpa found another place to live. Those are the only two houses I remember living in as a child.

Q: What was your grandpa's name?

A: Talbot Humphriess.

Q: Do you remember the name of your father's employer that you mentioned?

A: Frank Miller. Well, there were brothers, Frank and Alec.

Q: Do you remember your father or your mother having any special hobbies or interests or things of that nature?

A: My father had a hobby--it wasn't necessarily a hobby, it was part of our livelihood--of hunting, trapping. He would work all day and maybe go out coon hunting until four o'clock in the morning and sleep a couple of hours--or maybe it wasn't always that late--sleep a couple of hours and back up again and back to work. This is what helped make our living too, you know. Then as far as Mom, she never had time to have any hobbies because when they got through, there was eight of us kids and she was pretty busy (laughs) canning, gardening, you know, and taking care of us kids. And of course in those days, she washed on a board. So she had her hands pretty full.

Q: Did your father hunt anything besides coons?

A: Oh, coons, possums and of course, trapped for mink and muskrat. And of course in season, squirrels, rabbits, you know, like all hunters do.

Q: The two houses that you lived in, were they fairly close together in the country area or were they in opposite areas of Pleasant Plains?

A: No, no. They were just about, what we would have in the city, like two blocks apart.

Q: Is that right?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Well, growing up there all the time you must've gotten to know the neighborhood pretty well, the other neighbors and things.

A: Well, we didn't have--other than my father's boss--we didn't have any close neighbors. Across the field was the Rapps family and they had two children around my age and we'd get to go over and visit and play with the Rapps children occasionally. But that was too far from home for us to get to walk. My dad was pretty strict and he didn't let us go too far too often.

Q: Did you have any other relatives living in the Pleasant Plains area?

A: Oh, quite a few, yes. My dad's sisters and my mom's sister. . . .

Q: Did you see them quite often?

A: Well, we did our visiting on Sunday, you know. Usually some of the relatives come to our house on Sunday for dinner, or occasionally we would go to their house. But Dad was always kind of hesitant about going to anybody's house for dinner because we were a big family. But they were too and it didn't bother them, but it bothered my dad, you know.

Q: Did you get in to the town of Pleasant Plains often as a child?

A: No. Only in the summertime, and they would have free movies on the streets. They'd put benches out on the main street, you know, and have a screen outdoors and that was our entertainment. If the weather was good, we got to go to the movie with the parents. But other than that, no, we

didn't. Dad did the grocery shopping and . . . we didn't go to town, or didn't get to come to Springfield. They didn't come very often, Christmas shopping or to the fair. Dad would bring us to the fair because he liked to see the farm machinery.

Q: Do you remember what the town of Pleasant Plains was like?

A: Oh, definitely. At that time, they had three grocery stores and it was only a town of around 400 people. A barber shop, a bank, a post office, drug store, and then a general store--Mrs. Aid's little general store where you could buy anything from a spool of thread to an ice cream cone, you know--and they had a dry goods store where you could buy shoes, yard goods, just, you know, anything along that line. But for a small town, they had quite a few businesses at that time.

Q: Yes.

A: We had three doctors that would make house calls. (laughs)

Q: Your family's doctor lived in Pleasant Plains?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: Doctor Fink, and his wife was close related to the people that . . . her family were owners of the Clayville Museum, where the Clayville Museum is today.

Q: You said awhile ago that you only basically came to Pleasant Plains during the summertime. You went to school someplace else?

A: Well, no. No. I'm sorry about that. We went to school, yes, in--high school--in Pleasant Plains.

Q: How about grammer school?

A: In a one room school building. Called it the Richland Grade School, which Richland was a little area with an elevator and a little grocery store. But the school was a few miles from Richland, but that was the name of the school. It was a one room school building.

Q: How many grades were in that one room school?

A: Eight.

Q: Eight grades. How many teachers?

A: One. But there was four people in my grade, four students, and the four of us started grade school together, first grade. Occasionally someone else would come in and move out, you know, but there was four of us that started together and graduated from high school together.

Q: I'll be darned. Can you remember what kind of things that you and your brothers and sisters did for recreation when you were still children living at home?

A: Well, we . . .

Q: You mentioned the movies.

A: . . . entertained each other. We got out in the road and played ball. We played the usual games that kids played in those days, like tag and hide-n-go-seek. Of course, there was enough of us that we didn't (laughs) we had plenty --there was eight of us, you know--so there was plenty of us to play all these games. In the wintertime, when the snow was on the ground, we play like fox and geese and my brother had a sled, we got to take turns sled riding. Then the windmill was kind of like on a hill and we'd intentionally run over the water so it would freeze and then we'd go out there and slide down the hill on the ice and it made a little crick-like. That was our entertainment. It didn't cost much to entertain us.

Q: Your brother was younger than you apparently.

A: Oh, yes.

Q: What was his name?

A: John.

Q: Did your family attend a church at any time?

A: Well, none of us kids were baptized, but we got to go to Sunday School at the Richland Baptist Church, which is still in operation. A small country church.

Q: Did the children in your family have work at home to do, chores, responsibilities?

A: Oh, always. Always.

Q: Were they assigned specific for a certain person--a certain person does these sort of things or did you just all pitch in and help out?

A: Well, I don't know. We just more or less knew we had to do it. For example, we didn't have a coal shed at the house we lived at. But my dad's employer that had the coal mine, he had a big coal shed and all the coal went there. And we knew before we went to school we had to carry enough coal to last Mom all day. And when we came home from school, we carried enough coal to--of course, in those days, there was a heating stove and a cook stove. There was nothing electric or gas. And of course I said she washed on the board, we carried in the wash water before we'd go to school. Just those kind of, you know, all those kind of chores we did. We worked in the garden and we kept the yard clean.

Q: How far did your father's employer live from your house?

A: Oh, there was a big garden between us. I don't know.

Q: Half of a city block?

A: Probably. In hollering distance. (laughs)

Q: Do you remember as a child having any diseases or illnesses?

A: Oh, we had all the common diseases, the measles, the mumps, the chicken pox, and scarlet fever. I had yellow jaundice. That happened right at an appropriate time, at Halloween, and I was as orange as a pumpkin. (laughter) And when I had scarlet fever, it affected my heart and my legs, and I went into rheumatic fever and I could not walk for a long time. It was just like I had to almost learn to walk over again.

Q: How long?

A: Oh, several months.

Q: I'd like to ask you some questions now that are pertaining to your recollection--I guess you would be in high school at the time--just prior to the war, to World War II, 1941. You would've been, I suppose, about a sophomore in high school in 1941. Can you remember much about your school life?

A: Oh, yes, I remember quite a bit about my school life.

Q: Anything in particular?

A: Well, I didn't like algebra. (laughter) That I remember. All of the teachers I think I can still recall. The home ec teacher we had so much fun with, and she always was a jolly person and her name was Margie Culvey and we were always teasing her. We'd go into the home ec class, if you can't imagine this, every day singing that song about Margie, and one day she just wasn't in a very good humor, and me and one of my friends went in singing, "Margie, my little Margie," you know, and she hushed us up real quick and put us at separate tables, we didn't get to sit, and she put her book down and she wouldn't even teach the class. And then after class, she sent us to the principal's office, and that's the only time that I ever saw the lady in a bad humor. She must've not felt well that day or something. (laughter) It took us by surprise! But she was really a good teacher. Well, I had a lot of good teachers.

Q: What were your favorite subjects in school?

A: Shorthand was one of my favorites, and English Literature and let's see, what else . . . oh, I loved spelling, but that was back in grade school, spelling and orthology and some of those subjects in grade school.

Q: Orthology?

A: Orthology.

Q: What is Orthology?

A: Well, it has a lot to do with spelling. For example, terra firma. You know, each part of that word has a meaning. It's defining words really.

Q: I see.

A: A lot of them I've forgotten now, but I really enjoyed that class. But in high school, in home economics and bookkeeping. I did bookkeeping, typing, and shorthand. I loved shorthand, and I probably couldn't write the first word now. (laughs)

Q: December 7, 1941, you would've been, I suppose, a junior in high school. You graduated in June of 1943? I believe you told me that?

A: Yes.

Q: So December of 1942 you would've been a senior.

A: A senior? Oh, of 1942, December, yes.

Q: December of 1941 you would've been a junior in high school. Were you working at the time? Did you work evenings?

A: Well, not during school. Only at . . . I worked for my father's employer. I would go and get his supper and do up the dishes after school at night, and then during the school year, you know, the school months, and on Saturday's I would do his house cleaning and this type thing. But in the summer months, we had other jobs, you know. I would come to town and work for Hopkins Drugstore, Graham's Cigar Store--which was a restaurant--this type thing in the summertime to make the money for us to buy our clothes and pay for our book rental to go to school the next year.

Q: By town, you mean Springfield?

A: Yes.

Q: Was your father's employer married at the time that you were working for him?

A: No. He was never married. He was a bachelor and his brother also was a bachelor. They were never married.

Q: At the time, let's say prior to December 7, 1941, did you have much interest in world affairs, the battles that were going on in Europe, things of that nature?

A: Not really. Our history that we studied in school was more ancient history, you know, like back when Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Andy Jackson, you know. We didn't study current events like kids do

today. I think in school now they probably teach more what is happening now than what happened hundreds of years ago like we had to do. There was not much current events discussed in our history class.

Q: Yes.

A: So I think children today are more aware of what's going on than what we were then.

Q: Did your parents, or did any of the children, subscribe to any magazines?

A: No, we didn't have any magazines.

Q: Did you get a newspaper?

A: No. Only the little Pleasant Plains Press which was the little newspaper printed right in town there. We also had a printing office, I forgot to tell you that. And they printed a weekly newspaper of the events that were happening around town there. You know, not . . .

Q: Were you aware that there was a war going on in Europe?

A: Not too much.

Q: Did you know of the existence of Adolf Hitler?

A: Oh, I'm sure I did, but it was, you know, it was so far away that at that age as I said, we weren't--like children today have TV, radios that keep them more up to what's going on than what we did when I was that age.

Q: Were you very aware of any kind of a role that America might be playing in world events? The policies of President Roosevelt or . . .

A: Well, I was quite a bit aware of President Roosevelt. I mean we thought he was quite a great person. After all, he was our President and the people that didn't have work, he created WPA. Oh, I'm sure he didn't do it alone, the congressmen and whoever goes along with that. People worked for their pay you know. I mean they didn't do like they do today, just somebody gives you money and food stamps. They had to work for it. Just like when I was in high school, I'm sure that he was probably the one that had something to do with instigating the NYA and these programs that helped the children in high school. When I was a senior, I went to school half a day. I had all my credits that I needed. Well, before I did this, I would work in the office at school for a small fee. You know, very small, but this was also a program that was instigated to help persons like myself to make money so I could pay my own expenses of school. But then whenever I . . . as I said, when I was a senior, I would get on the bus at noon and come to Springfield and work at the NYA, which was a training center more or less. I learned to operate--machine shop work--operate lathes, drill presses, anything that had to do with a machine shop. And then when I . . .

Q: That was when you were a senior?

A: Yes. After I completed so much of that, then they put me in the office and I took care of the attendance and did shorthand, took notes for the bosses in shorthand, and typed and just general office work. And then when I was through high school, then they were responsible for getting me employment and--which they did. I went to work for Hummer Manufacturing Company, but this was after the war had started.

Q: The time that you worked at the NYA as a senior, that would've been after the war started also.

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Do you know if the NYA existed before the war started?

A: Well, I'm sure it did, because my husband tells me that he worked for the NYA and he worked in the state library. So it had to be before the war started, but I think so was WPA. But you asked my feelings about Roosevelt, and I think that this was good that he did these kinds of things to . . . or, he didn't do them alone, I know that.

Q: Before the actual attack of Pearl Harbor, do you recall whether or not you had any idea that there was a threat of war between America and Japan?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: It came as a total surprise?

A: Well, I think it did probably to a lot of us country people.

Q: Did you have any friends or relatives from the Pleasant Plains area in the service before America went into the war?

A: Friends. Some of the fellows that I graduated from school, like maybe when I was a freshman, but they were friends longer than that, you know. They were born and raised in that community also. But they had enlisted in the service like young men do when they get out of school, some young men do when they get out of school, and they were in Pearl Harbor when the attack came.

Q: Do you remember where you were at on December 7, 1941 when you heard about it?

A: Oh, definitely. The family, we were out in the front yard, and I don't know was it on a Sunday afternoon? And the family usually made--of course, I say front yard but it was just a, you know, country yard--and we made ice cream and the relatives down the road used to come over and have homemade ice cream on Sunday afternoon. And my father's employer, he was listening to his radio and he had heard this and he came out and yelled across the garden. As I said, we were in hollering distance. And he came out and hollered across the garden and told us what had happened. And that's how we found out about it.

Q: Can you remember what your personal reaction was when you heard that?

A: Well, I think everyone was in a state of shock you know. After all, in our lifetime we had known no such thing as war. But in history books, we had read about wars you know, so this was quite a terrible thing.

Q: So you'd say your reaction was similiar to everyone elses?

A: Oh, definitely.

Q: Did you realize at the time that some of your friends were at Pearl Harbor?

A: I did not know that that's where they were, no, until we got the word that they were killed.

Q: Can you remember any of the names of the friends that were killed at Pearl Harbor?

A: I can remember two of the names, Stribling Boynton.

Q: Stribling . . .

A: Boynton, B-O-Y-N-T-O-N, and Clarence Alexander. And from a community that small, for two of them, you know, that was quite shocking.

Q: Do you remember how you found out that these two friends had died at Pearl Harbor?

A: Well, it don't take long for news in a small community to travel, you know. I don't know whether Dad had found out in town or whether his employer or whether someone hauling coal from the coal mine, you know, just exactly how, but it didn't take long for them to find out.

Q: Were there other friends that were in the service at that time who weren't killed at Pearl Harbor?

A: Oh, it seems like one of the Rackerts was. I'm sure there was more, but it's been a few years ago and I just can't remember all the names. Those two boys there were the most outstanding.

Q: What was your reaction when you heard that these two boys had died?

A: Why, terrible, because you know, we'd known them all of our lives and this was just . . . I mean in the first place, war was something that we were not accustomed to, and then to hear that the two boys had been killed.

Q: Can you remember the reaction of other people, the reaction of the town? Was there any special service or ceremony or something like that for these two boys?

A: Well, if I can recall right, when they had memorial services for them, when they . . . just as they had the funeral, of course, they would

have regular funeral service, the casket with the boy's picture sitting on the casket. Because naturally, the boys are not ever going to be buried, you know, but they do have a grave in Pleasant Plains cemetery, with the services just like anyone else's funeral.

Q: So there was a memorial service for them?

A: Oh, definitely. Oh, yes.

Q: Did you attend?

A: No, I didn't. My parents did things like that. Us kids, even though they were our friends, we didn't.

Q: Your parents did attend.

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Were those boys on a ship at Pearl Harbor?

A: On the Arizona.

Q: Can you recall in those first days, first months, following Pearl Harbor, any changes that immediately happened in your life? Any adjustments, either to your way of living or your way of thinking?

A: Well, naturally, we had--as I said--we had never thought about war before and it was a big worry, you know. After all, we were concerned about what was going to happen to us over here in this country.

Q: In what way were you concerned?

A: Well, we didn't want no war over here, and our people that had never, you know, heard of . . . I mean this is real. What you read in history books was one thing, but this was really happening, and it was frightening.

Q: In those early days right after the war had started, did you become more aware of what was going on in Europe?

A: Well, as much as we could hear on the radio. As I said, we did not have newspapers. Only what we'd hear on the radio or what people would discuss, you know, and of course you know how some people discuss things, you're liable to hear anything. You don't know which . . . you know, they can frighten you or you don't know what to think about it.

Q: You did have a radio at home?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Can you remember whether you were more concerned about one enemy than the other attacking America?

A: Well, naturally we . . .

Q: Japan or Germany?

A: . . . naturally, we were very down on Japan, so much that you wouldn't wear a garment if it was made in Japan. You wouldn't buy anything with a Japan label on it. You just didn't do that, because after all, they attacked our country.

Q: There was a stronger feeling, at least at that point, against Japan than there was Germany. Is that what you're saying?

A: Well, in our community there was. And then we got fighting over Germany a little later on.

Q: After the war started, did you know other boys from your community who enlisted or were drafted?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Now, I believe we've covered this. You graduated in June of 1943. Did you know boys from your class that either enlisted or were drafted?

A: Well, there wasn't very many boys in my class. Most of the boys in my class were farmers, and farmers didn't have to go. And a lot of them that were not farmers turned farmers just real quickly because if they were farmers, they just didn't have to go.

Q: People in your community became farmers quickly?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: What was the reaction of the other people in your community?

A: Not too good. They'd go as far as to go to the draft board and really raise a ruckus because their boy was in service and that one man didn't have to go, and create quite a scene. But some of them that had never . . . their fathers were farmers but they didn't necessarily work at that. Well, all of a sudden, they were farmers also. And it did, it created quite a problem.

Q: Your father was too old for the service at this time, was that true?

A: Right. And my brother was too young.

Q: With that in mind, can you recall what your father's attitude about the war was?

A: Well, he was just as concerned as anyone else even though he didn't have a son old enough to go. But everyone was concerned, but I think he was a lot like the fathers that had boys that had to go and was bitter because some of the boys that . . . the rest of the boys didn't have to go, you know. He had feelings for the ones that had to go just like the parents that their boys were over there. But I know it was one man in particular, Mr. Burgess. He was fighting the draft board all the time because his son had to go and the rich farmers sons didn't have to go.

His son got his notice to appear for the draft and he went up there and .

End of Side One, Tape One

Q: You were telling me about Mr. Burgess going to the draft board. What did he do there?

A: He went stomping in with his son's notice to appear, and he wadded it up and threwed it in the wastebasket and let them know what he thought about them calling his son and not calling Bill Hagen. Bill Hagen was a farmer and he didn't get called and Mr. Burgess didn't like that a bit.

Q: What happened to Mr. Burgess' son?

A: He went to service. (laughter)

Q: And what happened to Bill Hagen?

A: He didn't go to service.

Q: Did you ever . . .

A: In a small town like that, those things just don't--or small communities, you know--those thing just don't work. If my son goes, everybody goes.

Q: Did you ever write to any of the boys that were in the service?

A: Yes, my boyfriend. (laughs)

Q: What was his name?

A: John Willis.

Q: And so you and John corresponded?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: What theater was he in? Europe or the Pacific?

A: The Pacific.

Q: Do you remember if your boyfriend, John Willis, was in the service prior to America going into the war, or did he join later?

A: Oh, he enlisted in the marines.

Q: After the war broke out?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have any friends that were killed during the course of the war, other than Pearl?

A: No, no one I recall. Had a cousin injured, but no one that I know was killed.

Q: As the war progressed, did you follow what was going on, where the American battles were at, etc.?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: How did you follow it?

A: By that time I was reading in newspapers. I mean I was in town and working and . . . different people's conversations. You know, you know what's going on.

Q: Yes. You mentioned earlier that it was later that you felt a threat from Germany. Earlier the threat was basically or solely Japan. Can you remember why you later felt this threat about Germany?

A: Well, from the news and people older than me talking about it. I suppose that's the reason I say that. Hitler was a bad person as far as . . . I don't know how to explain it, but he was something that everybody talked about and how he just like maybe a little kid, to me, he would be like a little kid with a bogeyman, you know.

Q: Did Germany somewhat replace Japan in your mind as the major problem?

A: I think so.

Q: I'd like to ask you some questions now, Mom, about--in a more general sense perhaps--about the homefront. When you graduated from high school, I believe you mentioned earlier that you worked at the Hummer Manufacturing Company?

A: That's right.

Q: What did you do there?

A: I was a tool grinder and Hummer Manufacturing Company, before the war--it is a branch of Montgomery Ward--and before the war, they made cream separators and pumps and general things for farmers. And during the war, they made--one of the projects I know that they worked on--they made airplane propellers. I was a tool grinder, which I sharpened the tools that they used on the machines to make the airplane propellers. I was the one that . . . there were two girls and the rest of them were men because we were in a factory where it had all been men, you know. When the war broke out, that's when the women went into the factories to replace the men that had went to service. So that was my job, grinding the tools, sharpening the tools that the men used--men and women--used on the machines to make the airplane propellers.

Q: Let me get this straight, there were only two women working in the factory?

A: No, in the tool grinding department, which was a very dangerous job.

Q: Did you keep that job for the duration of the war?

A: No. As I said, it was a very dangerous job and I got my finger cut off on a machine that didn't have a guard on it, and so my finger got in the way of the wheel that ground the tool.

Q: Did you leave Hummer's then?

A: No. After I returned from the hospital, when I went back to work, they tried to get me to go back into that department and I wouldn't, I refused. I was scared to death! I'd already lost one finger, I'm not going to lose any more, you know, so for awhile they let me work as an inspector but then they still wanted me to go back into the tool grinding department and I quit.

Q: How long were you off when you had your finger cut off?

A: Gosh, I can't remember. Probably not more than a month.

Q: Were you paid during that month?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you remember any other, were there other industrial accidents at Hummer's at the time that you were working there?

Q: Well, not necessarily at the time I was working there, but the older man that had been there for years like on punch presses and things and as I was only like eighteen years old and I'd already lost a finger, and they'd worked on punch presses and they'd show me, some of them maybe had four different stubs, you know, on their hands from working the punch presses. But I guess in those days, that just went along with that factory work. And it frightened me enough that I just didn't want no more part of it.

Q: Can you remember any homefront activities, such as Red Cross drives for food or blood or anything of that nature?

A: Of course as I said, my home was in Pleasant Plains, I just worked in Springfield. And in Pleasant Plains, it wasn't that big a community. The one thing that they did do was everybody saved their tin cans. All tin cans were recycled and you just opened a can, you saved the can. Smash it and save it and turn it in to their scrap drives.

Q: Did someone come by to collect those or was there a center you took them too?

A: No. There was a place that we took them to.

Q: Were there any in Springfield or in Pleasant Plains, were there any such things that you might describe as war rallies to get the population behind the war?

A: Well, of course, we had Red Cross, but I just can't remember.

Q: Do you remember gas rationing?

A: Yes. Of course, I didn't drive so that didn't affect me too much. I usually took a bus. We had a lot of things that were rationed, you know.

Q: Anything that you can remember?

A: Well, sugar, for example, and in the country they would base how much sugar you got on the size of your family. Farm wives, they would go with what . . . you had to report what you canned last year that would use sugar, and your sugar ration would be based on the previous year, you know. And I know we drank a lot of iced tea with sacchrine in it because Mom would use the sugar for other things. Of course, we picked a lot of blackberries and things in the summertime, and she even canned with sacchrine.

Q: Was that the first time you had ever heard of sacchrine?

A: I think so.

Q: Was it as good as sugar?

A: Oh, no. It tasted terrible!

Q: What else do you remember being rationed?

A: Well, practically all your food was. Your shoes, your shoes you'd get two stamps a year to get a pair of shoes unless well, the people that had to have special work shoes or something, I think they made allowance for that. But the average person got two stamps a year. You couldn't go out and just buy a pair of shoes because you thought they were pretty and you wanted them. You didn't have a closet full of shoes.

Q: The stamps said "Shoes" on it?

A: Well, I'm sure it did, because it could only be used in a shoe store. Like sugar, you could only get sugar with a sugar stamp. And coffee, now I believe if it wasn't rationed, it was just hard to come by. And cigarettes, there was no popular brand of cigarettes. There was such things as Twenty Grand, Spuds, names that you'd never heard of before and you'd probably never hear of afterwards. Lucky Strike was a popular brand in those days, and they had a slogan that Lucky Strike Green had gone to war, which they were in a green, red, and white package. Never again have they been in that package.

Q: But you couldn't get Lucky's during the war?

A: Oh, no. Well, then the chocolate candy bars, Lucky Strike cigarettes--I mean not Lucky Strike cigarettes but most of your popular brand cigarettes . . . in other words, they were sent overseas to the servicemen, which was only right. Nylon hose was rationed, or suphose, whatever it was in those days. But occasionally you would hear of Neumode Hosiery were getting a shipment of hose, and there'd be lines down the street that you wouldn't believe. Half the line would be men. I'm sure that their wives sent them to get them--the wives might've been in the line too--but also the men were standing there so they could get an extra pair for their wife. And there were meat, there was a ration on meat. All the good, naturally the better meat went for the armed forces and like, restarants would have a meatless day. One day a week they would choose and they didn't serve meat. And there was just all kinds of things like that, you know, and shortages of appliances. You couldn't buy a refrigerator, you couldn't buy a washing machine. They just wasn't to be had. The materials that went into them I'm sure they were using for making artillery.

Q: Do you remember if there was anything else other than tin cans or scrap metal that people here at home were asked to collect?

A: No, not offhand. I mean that's just a couple of the things, but I can't remember anything else in particular that we had to collect.

Q: Pleasant Plains being in the Midwest, do you remember anything about civil defense or air raids?

A: No. Well now, not in Pleasant Plains, but when I was working in Springfield, we had what we called brownouts. I think on the West Coast they were blackouts, but in Springfield it was, I think, called brownouts. And of course we had curfews and people had to be off the streets at a certain time at night. I was working in a restaurant at the time and all taverns had to close at midnight. Now, the restaurants could stay open, but they couldn't have no--nobody had any outdoor lights on--and they were supposed to have curtains on the windows to close out the light from the inside. In other words, as I said, they called them brownouts. And they were very strict because we had MP's on our streets here in Springfield that seen that these orders were followed.

Q: Military personnel, Military Police?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Was there a military base here in Springfield?

A: Well, I know they used the fairgrounds and possibly Camp Lincoln at the time I think most of the American soldiers were stationed. But at one time, they brought in . . . we had 500--well, we were told 500, more or less--Chinese soldiers that were stationed at the state fairgrounds.

Q: Did you often see soldiers on the streets here in Springfield?

A: Oh, yes, that's all we did see because most all of the eligible men were gone.

Q: Did you see the Chinese soldiers on the streets?

A: Oh, yes. The bowling alley was The Bowl. It was at Second and Adams. It was about the only place that us girls went, you know, and it would be full of them.

Q: Of?

A: Of Chinese soldiers.

Q: Chinese soldiers?

A: Yes. And they'd try to speak to us and we didn't know the first thing they were saying. I didn't stand around to listen to try to find out either! (laughs)

Q: Did you see fraternizing between the people of Springfield and the Chinese soldiers?

A: Oh, yes, quite a bit. The girls were always getting arrested. They would be out even digging under the fence at the fairgrounds to get in with the guys. I guess it was because there were no guys here. I don't know. But that wasn't my cup of tea.

Q: Did you have any friends or relatives who found it more to their cup of tea?

A: Not with the Chinese, with some American soldiers that were stationed here.

Q: They dated the American soldiers.

A: Oh, yes.

Q: What did you think about that?

A: Well, I just didn't think it was quite right to be a stranger on the street and in the bowling alley. Of course, we weren't raised that way. You had to know them I think. I think I thought you had to know them all your life or you couldn't go out with them. (laughs) But my sister met a soldier on the street. She stopped to tie her shoe and he said, "May I help you tie your shoe?" And the next thing I knew, they were walking into the restaurant where I worked and it really upset me because I didn't think that she should have met a guy and start going out with him. Especially a man in uniform, we just didn't do that. Not that I had anything against a man in uniform because I knew they all had to--but these were strangers. And as it turned out, he was a married man from someplace else.

Q: Oh, my gosh! Did your sister find this out immediately or after the war?

A: Oh, yes. After several months and him working on her sympathy, you know. He got shipped out of town and he was down in the southern states

someplace and he would tell her he would come home for the weekend if he had the money, but he didn't have it. So she would send it to him and he'd go home to Michigan to visit his wife and children. (laughter) She didn't know why he didn't come home, but he didn't come home. And then her girlfriend was going with this guy's buddy--and later they did get married--and Evelyn told her that Andy was married and had a family. A lot of people acted foolish during the war.

Q: Can you remember V-mail?

A: Yes. That was Victory mail when we wrote to the guys overseas.

Q: It was the letter that you wrote to them was called Victory Mail?

A: I think that was what the stamp represented. I vaguely remember it.

Q: Can you remember anything special about what the mail looked like that you received back from the servicemen?

A: Well, it seems like the envelopes were very tissuey-type paper. It wasn't the stationery that we use today.

Q: Was there any war propaganda that you can remember? And I'll give you an example here: anti-German posters or anti-Japanese posters. Can you remember anything like that?

A: I don't remember too much of that being around here.

Q: Do you remember movies about the war coming out during the war?

A: I don't think they made them until after the war. I mean I don't remember seeing war movies during the war. I know the songs, all the music changed, you know, to . . . oh, Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree, and I Don't Want to Walk Without You. I mean they were all real tear jerkers you know. (laughs)

Q: Did you notice visably a change in lifestyles as an effect of all of the things we've talked about, such as gas rationing, food rationing, scrape drives etc.? Did things seem different?

A: Well, they may have to a lot of people, but it didn't really bother us that much because we never went that much that we had to use gas and we never had to eat extravagantly and we managed quite well. I'm sure .

Q: So it didn't have a major effect on your life.

A: Not really. I'm sure that people that had been accustomed to higher living, it must have affected them, but we survived not much different than we always had.

Q: Did--this is a hypothetical question--as you look back on it now, had there not been a war do you think those years would've been different for you? Would you have done other things, would you have went other places?

A: Oh my, that is a hard one. Probably I wouldn't have spent so many years in the big city. I'd probably have married some country boy and settled down out in the country. (laughs) That's the only thing I can say.

Q: Did you know people who it had a bigger affect on than it did on you?

A: Oh, I'm sure that . . .

Q: Parents with children in the service that you knew, or . . .

A: I'm sure it had an affect on people that had children in the service or brothers or loved ones, and it also had an affect on a lot of families while for example, the men were gone to service and the women chased around with other men and the men over there probably did the same thing, and there was mistrust and it caused a lot of broken families.

Q: You mentioned earlier that you had a boyfriend in the service that you wrote to and he wrote back. Did your relationship with him break up because of the type of thing that you just said?

A: That's right.

Q: Mistrust? (pause) Do you care to go into it?

A: Well, I'd rather not.

Q: I want to digress just for a moment, you mentioned that you left Hummer's. Where did you work then?

A: Oh, I think the first job I had was in the shoe store.

Q: Doing what?

A: Selling shoes, which is a very difficult job. No one should ever do it. Oh, a ladies shoe store by the way, and they'd try on every shoe in the store. Which reminds me of a cartoon I saw in Sunday's paper, the two women that were trying on shoes and then they decided they liked each other's shoes and walked out of there without buying any. (laughter) That's just about the way it goes.

Q: Did the customers that you had complain about rationing of shoes?

A: No, I don't think so. I didn't run the cash register, I just sold them and just fitted them, you know, and they might've got those complaints up at the cashier's desk. But I tried that for awhile, and as I said, it was a difficult job. And then most of the rest of time during the war I worked in restaurants.

Q: Were you aware during the war that the Japanese-Americans had been relocated to centers?

A: Well, now what do you mean?

Q: Well, during the war, Japanese-Americans living on the west coast were relocated into what they called relocation centers, large camps. Were you aware of that during the war?

A: I don't think so. I guess I just didn't do a lot of reading. I do more now than I did then when I was of that age.

Q: Before the war ended, were you aware of the German persecution of Jews?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Before the war ended, were you aware of the German concentration camps?

A: Yes. We would hear about it, you know, by radio, or even if you did read it in a newspaper, but at my age it was awfully hard to comprehend because this was all--I mean it was terrible--but it was all so far away, you know what I mean? And I distinctly remember V-J Day.

Q: Tell me what you remember about that?

A: Well, of course . . . no, I'll go on with what we were talking about. When the word came that the atomic bomb had been dropped and we had signed the pact or whatever they did and the war was over with Japan, well the whole city of Springfield went wild. There was nobody in the businesses, everybody was out on the streets in cars and parades and just everything crazy that you can imagine was going on.

Q: How long did that celebration last?

A: Probably for two days at least. It was wild. Everybody was like crazy people. (laughs)

Q: Now, you mentioned the atomic bomb. Do you remember when you first heard that an atomic bomb had been dropped?

A: Oh, I can't remember exactly when, you know, but I do remember that it happened. Which was a horrible thing to happen to a country but apparently it had to be.

Q: Did you have any comprehension at the time about the magnitude of what an atomic bomb was?

A: Oh, no. We'd never heard of anything like that before.

Q: What did you think it was?

A: From all I heard and read, it was a very destructive thing. I mean, something that I had never heard of before or couldn't even begin to think about. I'm certainly glad it was there instead of here.

Q: Were there any--you mentioned that the Chinese soldiers were stationed here, was there any problem because of race and the fact that we were in

war with Japan, was there any problem or persecution of those Chinese soldiers?

A: Oh, I don't know that they were persecuted, but I know that . . . I know my own feelings that they had no business here. We didn't feel like they belonged in our town, you know, and I really never knew why they were here.

Q: What about the German-American population, were you ever aware of any ill-feeling towards them?

A: Oh, I'm sure that there might have been, but I didn't know anyone personally, you know. I'm sure that there were a lot of our friends that were of German descent, but never thought about it in that way.

Q: I could of course be wrong, Hummer's strikes me--Hummer's Manufacturing Company--Hummer's strikes me as a German name. Never thought about that?

A: No. (pause) They're still in business, but not in this town. They are like a lot of factories from Springfield that have moved. People that I worked with I have met recently and they have retired from Hummer's Manufacturing Company in Colorado. They relocated out in Colorado.

Q: Do you remember D-Day, at the time it happened?

A: I really can't recall too much. I said V-J Day, yes, but there's a lot of things that have, you know, just as the years go by that you forget about. I'm sure that people that had someone close in service could tell you more about that than I can.

Q: After the war there was a series of trials of war criminals. Do you remember any particular feeling about those trials?

A: No, not really. I just don't remember too much about them.

Q: Is there anything that we haven't touched on that you would like to talk about now?

A: Oh, back earlier you asked me about President Roosevelt, and President Roosevelt died during the war time, before the war was over, and that was a great--we all felt--a great loss to everyone, and there was quite a show of feelings on that. All the businesses closed . . . they didn't just do like they do today, like fly the flag at half-mast. Everything closed down. I mean that was a really a sad affair for all of us. I think back then, though, that people had stronger feelings for their leaders than they have today.

Q: Have people changed or have the leaders?

A: That'd be hard to answer. Who's to say?

Q: What about President Truman, who followed President Roosevelt. Was there a concern about what kind of a man he was, about the future of America's success in the war?

A: Oh, I don't know. Everybody has different opinions.

Q: What was yours?

A: I trusted him.

Q: By that time the war was going better and you felt it would continue to do so?

A: Well, I suppose. He was the president and I have confidence in the president.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this oral interview.

A: Well, I don't know whether I enlightened you any on it, but I told you everything I know.

Q: I think you did a terrific job. Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

End of Side Two, Tape One