

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Depression Project

Life during the Depression

O. H. 270

VIOLET SKINNER

Interviewed

by

Ellen Daniels

on

June 2, 1978

VIOLET SKINNER

Violet Skinner was born in Youngstown, Ohio on April 25, 1912 to Orrie Gibson and Olie May Musser Gibson. She lived in the Youngstown area and eventually moved to Struthers. Violet graduated from Struthers High School in 1930.

In 1936 she married her first husband, Everett Daniels. They had one daughter who they called Ellen May Daniels. During this time period, 1930-1941, Violet did not work at any job. In the 1950's she was self-employed; she cleaned houses for a living. In 1969 Violet married Roge Skinner. He died in 1971.

Today Violet Skinner is retired and lives with her daughter at 313 East Chestnut in Lisbon, Ohio.

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INTERVIEWEE: VIOLET SKINNER
INTERVIEWER: Ellen Daniels
SUBJECT: Life in the Depression
DATE: June 2, 1978

D: This is an interview with Violet Skinner for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program about the Depression by Ellen Daniels at 313 East Chestnut, Lisbon, Ohio, on June 2, 1978, at 4:00 p.m.

Violet could you tell me a little bit about what you remember about your early childhood? I know you were born in the 1912-1913 period, but what do you remember first of all, about World War I? Do you remember anything about it, or anything happening afterwards and then carry it on from there?

S: The only thing I remember about World War I was--I was only about five, five and a half years old, I kind of remember it--when we went down for the parade downtown. There were no parades, I remember, otherwise, downtown. So we went down there.

D: All right, in World War I, when you went downtown, you were living in Struthers, am I right?

S: No.

D: Where were you living then?

S: We were still living in Youngstown at that time.

D: Oh, okay.

S: Then I went down to Struthers.

- D: Okay, you started to elementary school someplace else, and then you went to Struthers. Well, what do you remember about Struthers when you started going to school and life in Struthers?
- S: Oh, when we first went there we were young, and you don't remember everything when you are growing up.
- D: Well, no, but what do you remember?
- S: I can't remember much of anything outside of when I started growing up.
- D: All right, well, I mean your high school years, do you remember stuff about that?
- S: Not very much. (Laughter)
- D: I remember at one time you telling me about watching the KKK parade.
- S: No, I watched the burning of the cross.
- D: Oh, was there one in your area?
- S: Yes.
- D: Do you know why it was done there?
- S: No, I have no idea, but I know why they burnt the cross. They didn't have any trouble in those days. They just burnt the cross. They were rounded up, and that's all there was, then people dispersed.
- D: Oh, just a meeting.
- S: Almost everybody was out and around watching them burning the cross. It wasn't like it is now, acts of violence.
- D: Okay, were any members of your family involved in the Ku Klux Klan?
- S: Well, my mother and dad were.
- D: But, you didn't know anything about, you couldn't say anything about that group at all?
- S: No, well, you see in those days everybody was around, not just the ones that burnt the cross. Everybody was around.

D: In other words, everybody was part of the KKK. It was one of those social type things?

S: Yes, that's it, a social type thing. It wasn't just like now. In those days everybody was around. I mean, it was a social thing.

D: Okay. When did you graduate from high school? Do you remember?

S: No.

D: When you graduated, was it during the Depression?

S: Yes.

D: Okay. What do you remember about the Depression, living in the Depression with your mom and dad and the whole bit?

S: You remember something about the Depression yourself!
(Laughter)

D: All right. What do you really remember about the Depression with your father and so forth?

S: Well, we just didn't have very much money, that's for sure.

D: Where did your dad work? Do you know? Do you remember what type of work he did?

S: Mine work, I think.

D: Did he, when the Depression started, work all the time?

S: No, I don't think anybody worked all the time. They all had some work, but they didn't have all work, during the Depression.

D: Yes. How did the Depression affect the way your family lived?

S: Most of the time we got what we wanted. We could get anything we wanted. Mom took me down to the Palace Theater to see Al Jolson in person. She took me to that sometime when I was in high school. All the band leaders, and everything else came to that place. They all came to the Palace. But you see, now they tore the Palace down. But everybody would come to the Palace.

D: In other words, it was a famous Vaudeville spot?

S: Yes, everybody would come to it.

D: When the Depression hit, did the size of your garden increase?

S: Well, where we lived in Struthers, we didn't have a garden.

D: Well, then how did you get your food? Did you buy it from the store?

S: We had to.

D: Did you discover that any of your food was not the same? Was there a change? Could you have more soup and was the soup spread out and so forth?

S: I don't really remember too much about the Depression. We didn't seem to be too hard hit by the Depression, not really hit. Dad must have been working pretty good because I know we weren't as hard hit as most of them during the Depression. Of course, we were hit, now, we didn't have everything we wanted, but we weren't starving either, let's say.

D: In other words, you always had a plentiful supply of food on the table and clothes on your back and so forth?

S: Yes.

D: When you got married, either in 1935 or 1936, when you were first starting out in marriage, was it very difficult to start out buying your housing utensils and so forth at that time?

S: No.

D: In other words, basically, we were coming out of the Depression during that period of time, but commodities could be bought without high expenses?

S: Things weren't high expense like they are now.

D: What do you mean? Can you remember anything?

S: Well, things were really cheap. When anybody came to do any work on your house, you didn't pay like

you do now. You pay an arm and a leg to have do any work for you. In those days they came, I think they put up our chimney for twenty-five dollars. You see what I mean. In those days they didn't charge like they charge now, when we first got married, when they fixed our house.

D: What do you remember about some of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's programs, such as CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps], WPA [Works Progress Administration], and so forth? Do you remember any of those?

S: Your dad worked on one of those.

D: All right, he worked on the CCC.

S: Yes.

D: Now, did they get paid, or what did they do, do you remember?

S: I suppose they got money, but they didn't get a whole lot.

D: Did they stay in the same area where they lived in, or were they in camps and so forth?

S: They lived in camps, some kind of camps and they must have sent money back, because they lived all right and we lived all right.

D: Let's go in a little bit advanced, to World War II. Were there any great changes in World War II that hit the consumer, the person buying goods?

S: Yes, everything started going higher and higher and higher!

D: Okay, in other words, you had inflation.

S: Yes.

D: Did you have any problems getting meat, or anything like that, gasoline?

S: Well, we were on rationings for a long while.

D: What do you mean rationings?

S: We had coupons, and you had coupons like this and you had to have so much to get a gallon of gas.

- D: All right, the coupons are approximately two inches by two inches, or something like that.
- S: Yes.
- D: Were they all one color?
- S: No, I think they were different colors. The one's that had to go to work, they got their stamps so they could go to work.
- D: For the gasoline.
- S: Yes, but just to run around, no. You just got enough for your . . . I suppose you had to get your groceries.
- D: How about meat, was that readily available from the stores for anybody to buy?
- S: Yes, I think so. We used to go to Poland Meat Market, I think. We always went there all the time, and we got our meat whenever they had it.
- S: So, whenever the supply of meat would come in everybody would go and get their meat? In other words, it wasn't always there on the counter every day?
- S: No.
- D: Okay. Can you remember anything else?
- No response.

END OF INTERVIEW