

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 845

MARGARET C. BLAIR

Interviewed

by

David P. Powell

on

November 11, 1986

MARGARET C. BLAIR

Margaret Blair is very active in our church. She teaches a Sunday school class of middle-aged adults and helps out with a youth group also. As you can see from her biography, she is in and active in many organizations. Margaret seems to be a much younger person than someone who is sixty-eight years old. She is full of energy and always willing to help.

I wanted to interview her because of the deep belief she holds that our country and Russia are heading the world toward a nuclear war. She feels that with more Christian love and help the world could be made a much better place for everyone. She also views that money being spent on weapons as a waste and one more chance for a mistake to start the last war. She is very interested in both South America and Asia--especially our country's handling of our foreign policy in those areas.

With her strong views that war is unthinkable and our country is just as much to blame as Russian for the present situation, I really wanted to hear her thoughts about the Second World War. I found that even Margaret felt we had to get into that war to stop Hitler. The added bonus was that Margaret and her husband lived in different parts of the country while the war was on. So she could give more than just the local view of "On the Homefront During World War II."

David Powell

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INTERVIEWEE: MARGARET C. BLAIR

INTERVIEWER: David P. Powell

SUBJECT: Home front during World War II

DATE: November 11, 1986

P: This is an interview with Margaret Blair for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Homefront during World War II, by David Powell, and it is taking place at 1212 Everett-Hull Road, which is her home, Cortland, Ohio, 44410. This is November 11th, and it is 7:14 in the evening.

All right, Margaret, would you say a couple things so we can see how the voice level is?

B: I have been here almost fifty years in this house. It will be fifty next July. I don't know what more to say in this connection.

P: All right now, on the interview could you tell us a little bit . . . Well first, how old were you about during the Second World War, when it started, and do you remember about the beginning of it?

B: What year was it that it started? Let's see, 1945?

P: 1941.

B: 1941. Okay in 1941. I was born in 1918, so that would make me around twenty. . .

P: Twenty-three.

B: I suppose some where in there. When the war started we were living here in this house and I had two children. Let's see, Beth was about three and Jamie was just born in 1941. He was six months old when we found out that

the war . . . The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. We were up in Cleveland visiting my relatives. They put it over the radio and we couldn't believe it. There had to be some mistake, it just couldn't be possible. And we listened and listened, and more and more we became convinced that it was true and it wasn't a mistake.

P: All right now, were you just a housewife then?

B: Yes. I had had two years of college and my husband was going to go to Ohio State for his electrical engineering degree. I asked my mother if I could go at Ohio State and she said no, so we ran off and got married. Then he did not go back to school as he should have. We stayed here with his mother who was a widow and was living alone and wanted someone to be with her. So my husband went to work at a Federal Machine and Welder in Warren, and worked there for several years. Let's see, we were married in 1937, so he worked there for several years making welders, then worked in the experimental department for a while, and liked that very much. But a nephew of the owner came and wanted a job, so they put the nephew in the experimental work at the experimental department. Charles was put back on the floor. About that time his brother-in-law put his name in as an electrician in the union and Charles was taken in. There was a need for more electricians by that time, and he went into the union.

We lived here . . . Let's see, Jamie was a year and a half old, which would be about 1943. We moved to Warren and bought a house down there and were fixing it up. By that time my husband was working at Copperweld putting in some kind of electrical equipment. I don't know what they were doing, but they were putting in electrical connections in Copperweld. He was working ten, twelve, and sometimes fourteen hours a day. It was so bad my little boy said one day to me, "Momma, is daddy ever coming home?" Because his father went to work in the morning before Jamie got up, and then he came home at night after Jamie had gone to bed. I didn't realize that he was never seeing his father, but of course he wasn't. We were working on that house. The house had not had anything done to it for a long time. So during all of this time we were tearing off wallpaper, and scraping woodwork, and remodeling the inside of the house. It was a terrific job. He worked intensely at work and then came home and worked several hours after that. And I worked in the daytime as much as I could.

P: Now, was he working that many hours because of the war?

B: Yes, they were building equipment, I suppose, for

England and the Allies. That was before we went into the war, but there was a lot of a build up built then. In 1943 we went west in July. There was a big call for electricians to come to Hanford, Washington. There was no knowledge about what was going on there, but just that they needed electricians there. So my husband and a friend of his, who was also an electrician, and the two families got house trailers, and we went west.

On the way I was pregnant, and my doctor was a little reluctant to see me go. I got as far as Shamrock, Texas when I had Cathy. She was born in a hospital. We had read in one of the Farm Journal magazines about a wonderful hospital in Oklahoma, and so as we were going west we were looking for this hospital. We visited my aunt in Henrietta, Oklahoma and she said, "It will be pretty soon now." I just laughed because I didn't realize. That night we were looking for a hospital. It was in the farthest part of Oklahoma. We saw several hospitals, but they weren't the one that I was looking for. Finally, we got to Shamrock, Texas and I said, "I guess we are going to have to stop here." We asked directions to the hospital and a man told us. We made a mistake and instead of going to the city hospital, we went across the street to the Catholic hospital. So she was born about 1:00 in the night. We got to the hospital about 12:00 or 12:30 and she was born at 1:00.

My husband and the other people in the trailer, they had had some trouble in there with the trailer. Incidentally, on the way out, because you could not get a tire to go anyplace, they would give you an old rag to get you to the next town. Then you would go through the ration board to get another tire, and that would take you to the next town then. So the Kightlinger's were having an awful time getting tires to get there. Then finally when they got settled and we stayed there, in Shamrock, for five days, I think. Maybe three days.

Anyway, then we went on to Amarillo which had a bigger hospital and there was better accommodations for the rest of the family. We went on and stayed in a hospital there. The eighth day we started and went west. We went on through Santa Fe, where we picked up another friend who was working at the Los Alamos Project. We didn't know what it was, but that was another secret thing that he was working on. Of course it ended up that that was where they were experimenting with the bomb. They were just about finished there in his part of the job, so he came on with us.

We came on up through Colorado and Utah and ended up in Hanford, Washington. It was a wide open place. It had been a little, tiny town with about a dozen houses, a

filling station, and a grocery store. They moved in 4,000 trailers, 4,000 people besides in dormitories. There were no accommodations for that many. They had to build an enormous grocery store. The biggest grocery store I ever saw up until that time, where people could come in. There were lines and lines of check-outs. They also built a post office and a bank. I nursed the baby; I would take her along. I could not go to the grocery store and get waited on, and go to the bank, and get gasoline and fuel oil, and get back to the car in the length of time it took between nursing. So I would take her along and nurse her in the car between, because you would wait for hours. It would take me all day long and if we hadn't had my mother-in-law along, I don't know what we would have done, because she stayed with the other two children while I was gone.

But you were in long lines, everywhere. In the post office they had A and B, C and D, each letter had a window and still you would have to wait in line. The biggest operation I had ever seen. We stayed in a temporary camp until they got the permanent camp. All of the streets were named after battles and we were on Palermo, which was P. So you can see how big the camp was. It was a huge place. They built bathhouses and some of the people had brought their washing machines along and would rent you one, or you would have to wash in the washtub. It was quite an operation.

Now all the time you were there you were not to speculate. No one was allowed to talk to anybody else about what they were doing. The whole area was blocked off into sections and men were not supposed to work in more than one section. But my husband and Bob Simison and Ronald Kightlinger, because they were electricians, went into different sections because they could do more and they couldn't just stay in one section. They knew an awful lot about the place, but nobody was allowed to speculate. Sometimes on Sunday morning we would all get together and have brunch. The men would talk about some of the things that were going on, but it was a hush hush deal.

We went out one time to visit some relatives of my mother-in-law over in a little town in Washington. We went out one gate and came in another gate and had an awful time. We were supposed to come back in the same gate that we had gone out and we didn't realize that when we had gone. They just about wouldn't let us come back in. We had all kinds of trouble getting back in. No one was allowed a camera, and no guns or anything. Of course we didn't have any guns, but no cameras were allowed. You weren't allowed to take pictures of anything. We stayed there then. . . Let's see, Cathy

had pneumonia, that's the baby, and I did too. All of the kids got chicken pox . . . No. What is it in your throat?

P: Mumps?

B: Whooping cough. They got whooping cough. In the hospital the government had promised. . . the women who worked in the hospital, (they were nurses from the big. . . Oh, what is the company that builds ammunition and all that sort of stuff in Delaware?)

P: Oh, DuPont.

B: DuPont. DuPont had promised their nurses that if they came to work there that they wouldn't have to wait on anybody. So I had to get up out of bed and walk to the bathroom, which was down a huge hall and over another section and back. Everything was cold, the rooms were warm, but the hallways were all cold. It was quite a place. They gave me pills like you wouldn't believe. Of course I had been used to having an osteopath, and I was not used to that sort of thing. We all got better. Of course, I couldn't nurse Cathy. They put her on diluted milk and she didn't do very well. She never got very big at that time and her teeth didn't form properly.

We went on the next spring. They had plenty of electricians there and they needed people down in California to build buildings to take care of the men who were working on building ships. So we went there. My husband worked in Long Beach and we lived in a trailer court in Palas Verdes Estates. It was very nice there, but things were not very good as far as getting good food. There was plenty of food at Hanford because they shipped in a terrific amount. But in L.A. where we grocery shopped, there was no meat. You could get rabbit and things like that, but there was no meat. Of course everything was rationed. We had no problem with that because we didn't drink enough coffee or use much sugar, so we always had that way ahead, and our meat coupons were always way ahead. All that sort of thing because we had a baby, and of course the baby didn't eat meat. We stayed there until the next year.

When Cathy was almost a year old I wanted to go home. For one thing, it looked as though Charles might be called out, and I didn't want to be left clear out in California with all of my relatives back in Ohio. So we decided to come home. We came on home and Charles was called the next spring. He got a job here and worked on more things. By that time they were taking men with three children. So he went into the Navy. While he was gone we lived in a little house over

across the corners. Charles' mother owned it, but it was his grandmother's house. We lived there for a while. We had a huge garden. Charles had planted a very big garden, and we lived off of the garden while he was gone.

He was at Great Lakes Naval Station and then was sent to a junior college in Chicago where he was doing radar. I don't know what all they did.

Anyway, he was taking that training. They kept him at the college there. Instead of being shipped out he was kept there and stayed there until he was discharged. I went out several times and took Cathy with me because she was little and my mother-in-law could manage the two older ones who were four and six and a half. Anyway they could be managed and it was hard for her to take Cathy, so I took Cathy with me. We were there the day that, VE Day, Germany surrendered. And all the men were allowed out. So I saw Charles and he said that he would come over to the place where I was staying. He didn't come, and didn't come, and didn't come. So I went back over to the college and he hollered out the window that they weren't allowed. . . All the men who had gone back in. The ones who had stayed out were allowed to stay out, but all those who had gone back. . . (I don't know what he went back for, but he went back in,) were made to stay. So he couldn't get out. I was talking to him and a young MP came along who was about nineteen. I was what twenty-seven, anyway, he was ordering me around and I was just a little provoked with him and I told him to mind his own business, that I could talk to my husband if I wanted to. Because I think he thought I was a strolling lady who was trying to make a date with a fellow.

Because Charles' mother's house needed . . . The chimney needed to be fixed and there were several things that needed to be fixed, the Red Cross got a leave for him to come home. He came home for a couple weeks then. That was in, I suppose, May and then he went back and the war was over then that fall.

What did we do here at home? Well, I took care of the kids and tried to do what I could with them. I kept the car going, I kept the garden going, and tried to live on the money that I got from the government.

P: Now my dad lived in the city of course, and he was telling about they had gone through blackout drills and so forth. Did something like that happen to you?

B: Oh, yes. When we were in Warren, we had the radio playing. Somebody knocked on the door and said that our curtains weren't clear in tight along the side and

for us to get them shut up right away, quick. We had the lights off. The only light that was on was from the radio. We didn't realize that that would show up, but it did so we had to pull those closed. Charles was working too many hours for him to work on anything like that. There were not too many. I suppose half a dozen drills, maybe not too much more. I suppose the hardest thing was with the two children then and being pregnant, I had to get the . . . Charles couldn't go to the auto. . . Oh, I have forgotten where the . . . Anyway, you could get your license in different places then. I had to get a power of attorney to get the car license so that we could drive the car.

I had left Beth with Jamie who was in . . . He was still in the baby bed. That must have been before I was pregnant. Anyway, she coaxed him out of the bed by piling the stuff up on the desk and getting him over the side. And then she turned on the water in the bathroom. We had just wallpapered the kitchen, and when I came back, she came running up the street and said something that she got Jamie out of bed. So I rushed back to the house and the water had come down through the ceiling and the wallpaper was just hanging about a foot down. I thought the whole thing was going to come down, but I managed to push it up and over the sides again. That wallpaper went right back up and was thoroughly stuck to the ceiling. I never could get over that. But I got the broom out and I swept the whole house. The water was cascading down the stairway. It was a real mess. I just got it all swept out and feeling that maybe I had accomplished something when my husband came home. I was really hoping that he had got there in time to help me get all of that stuff down. It was a real mess.

P: Now, because he was an electrician, you said you could move around fairly easy to jobs then.

B: Well, you had to get permission to get gasoline. It was one of those things that, they would give you gas to get . . . I guess we had gas most of the time. I think before we went Charles had to go and get a requisition to get gasoline to go. We didn't realize that the Kite's tires would go like they did. That was horrible. Finally we got to Arizona and Charles' late father's good friend was living in Arizona and was on the ration board. He finally got a tire that lasted for the rest of the trip, getting to Washington and getting on home. Well, Kightlingers never came home, they stayed in California. Before that it was everyday we were waiting. We would get to the next town and he would have to get another tire. They would just give him those old rags that weren't any good at all. The hard part about it was that we had turned in tires that

we had that could have helped us, but we turned them in because they asked for all of the tires. Then we discovered later that they burned them all, which was a very sad deal.

P: Especially if you had trouble with tires.

B: We got along pretty good. The Kightlingers had most of the trouble.

P: What were they doing out at Hanford?

B: Hanford. Well, they put in elevators. I really don't know all the things because they didn't talk about much, but I do know that the two of them put in Otis elevators in different places. I think that is why they were able to go to different sections, because they knew the elevator work and could do that.

I know the reason that they were in Hanford was because they needed an enormous amount of water. At that time you could look into the Columbia River, you could see the rocks on the bottom of the water. The water was that clear. We went across in a ferry. We went up to, up north where Bing Crosby came from. One Sunday we took a drive up there. Going across we could see the rocks on the bottom of the river. I had never seen a river that was that clean and that clear. The river was deep, it was a big river. It was nice weather there for them to have all of these people. The only thing, it didn't get cold, but it got enough moisture that you would walk and where you would walk, the gumbo would stick to your shoes. You would see a track, these dry tracks, where you picked up the mud as you went along. Of course, you dragged it into the house. It was bad as far as that was concerned. You had to sweep everyday, sweep the mud out of the house, or not mud but that fine silt.

P: Now my wife and I, when we were first married, lived in a trailer and it was eight by thirty-five.

B: That one's bigger.

P: I know. It has only been recently that they have gotten really large ones. What size was your home?

B: I suppose eight. . . It was as wide as they could and it was twenty-four feet long. It had a bedroom in the back with a built-in bed and cupboards and closets and all that sort of thing. The kitchen had so many places to put things that when we moved out, I moved all of the stuff out into the kitchen of the little house here and filled every cupboard that they had there. So there was a lot of space in it.

The bed, we had all of grandma's canned goods that she had canned that summer. We took all of the empty jars. In the front we had a settee that made into a bed, Charles and I slept there. Now, Jamie slept at the foot . . . Mother was a short woman, about five foot tall, and she had Jamie sleep at the foot of the bed, and Beth, who was five, slept with her. Then after the baby was born, the baby was in a bassinet. It had lots of cupboard space. It had a table that was compact and folded down in the long leaves. The chairs folded up into just a square. The legs folded under and the top folded down. It was a very nice trailer.

I enjoyed living there. My mother-in-law, if we wanted to get away from each other, I would go over to the bathhouse and do the washing or do something like that. She would have the trailer to herself. We never fought, but two women in a small space like that is a little hard.

P: Well, anytime you have too small of space you occasionally need breathing area.

B: Yes.

P: With your husband working so much then, I suppose you didn't have very much time for entertaining or was there any entertaining?

B: The only entertaining would be like this brunch that we would have on Sunday morning, and not all of the time. Because some of the time the fellows worked Sundays too. They put in a movie theater that you could go to. I think they put in bowling alleys, but they were not . . . We didn't bowl. I don't know how big the alleys were or anything like that. I know the theater was large because there were a lot of people there. There was a terrific number of people.

P: They would have had to start right from the beginning of the town.

B: The man who told me . . . I talked to the man who was the milkman for that area, and he got some percentage of all the milk. Before that he had just maybe a dozen houses and a little at the store. They brought in great truckloads of milk afterward and he got a percentage on all of that. He thought that heaven descended upon him. That was really something.

Of course, when we first went there, there was just a little grocery store and a meat market. You would wait for hours to get waited on. We got there at the end of September. Cathy was born the 27th, so it would be October when we got there. Christmas came not too long

after that, and I can remember trying to find things to send home for Christmas because we had relatives back here to send things to. It was a real madhouse just getting your things mailed. I spent one whole day just getting postcards, and Christmas cards, and packages mailed. I haven't thought of this for a long, long time. I was wondering, "What could I tell you about the Second World War?" I hadn't even thought about Hanford. That was quite a trip.

P: Then your husband and all of the men that he knew had really a lot of work?

B: Oh, yes. A terrific amount of work.

P: Well, if there wasn't much to spend to money on, what did you do with all the money?

B: Well, we saved. We bought war bonds and we saved considerable money. It was fairly expensive to live. We didn't have to pay rent, but we had . . . Things were expensive in the west at that time. I can remember one of our friends saying when he was back here that you wouldn't believe that price that you had to pay for bananas. When he got out in the west and discovered that they were more, he was really astounded at the whole thing, but the prices went up quite a bit. Although I think things were supposed to stay pretty much the same there, but I don't know that they did. I don't remember that part of it.

P: You mean the regional differences in prices?

B: I think there were regional differences.

P: Oh, I thought they had put a cap on prices and they were supposed to stay the same.

B: Well maybe they were the same, but they were much more than, maybe they were always more there than they were here. Because prices were more there than we had back here. I just assumed that they were higher out there, but I suppose since they were capped, but they were capped at the price that they were there.

P: Was there ever any feeling in danger because you were out in California?

B: No.

P: In other words, they never really felt the Japanese could attack?

B: I don't think so. Maybe there were some people who did, but I think a lot of that was who wanted to take

over the Japanese businesses, which they did.

P: Yes, I know they had done that. I have read about it.

B: They put a lot of good citizens in internment capture, who shouldn't have been.

P: I had read about that about eight, ten years afterwards. Never during the war of course.

B: No.

P: So there was plenty of work for everyone that wanted to work then?

B: The people that I know. I don't know about all lines, but carpenters, and electricians, and people like the building trades, all had lots of work.

P: Getting back here to your home, when you were first here Mosquito Lake wasn't there, was it?

B: Mosquito Lake had just been put in when we got back. And a stinking hole, because the stumps were still in. It just smelled to high heaven until they got the stumps out. We couldn't imagine anybody drinking it. In fact we used to say when we would go down to Warren and have a drink at the water fountains that you could taste the stumps. We called it stumpwater. It had just been put in while we were gone.

P: My understanding was that this whole area was nice farming area before they put the dam in.

B: Yes, it was good.

P: Of course that was before I was old enough to know very much about it.

B: Some of our friends, well relatives of Charles had a place down where the water is now. They took his place. The amount of money that he got from his place down there and big acreage, bought him maybe an acre up here, maybe two acres, and built the house. The house cost as much as the amount of money he had gotten, and it was just a small house. I think three bedrooms. They had a great big house, a big square house. So that money didn't go very far after he started building. Them things were scarce.

P: Now as the war went on, you talked a little bit about rationing and basically, except for having a little trouble with tires and so forth, tell me a little bit about what you remember about rationing. Was it really bad?

B: It wasn't bad for us. As I said, we had the baby and the baby got ration tickets. Since I nursed her when she was little, that didn't bother us then. We always had food. The only time we were ever scarce of anything was . . . I had lots of coffee stamps and my aunt, who was a nurse and who over the years had made coffee stronger and stronger to keep awake at night, she came down and used up all that coffee ration while she was visiting me. But we didn't drink a lot of coffee and we didn't use a lot of sugar. We got along all right with the meat ration, as far as we were concerned. Shoes and things like that were all right because I was pretty careful with the kids' things. We didn't have any real problem that I remember. I don't think.

P: Then the rationing never really caused severe shortages?

B: Not for our families. Now some families where they had a lot of grown ups who drank a lot of coffee. . . I can remember people complaining because they didn't have enough coffee, but we didn't drink a lot of coffee. So that didn't bother us. I can't remember that we ever . . . We always had extra meat that we would buy, Spam or things like that, just in case we would need it. But I don't remember that we were ever in any great hardship for us. I had three little kids and each of those kids had a ration book. If I had had three teenagers now, that might have been another story. Little kids don't eat a great amount.

P: No, they don't.

B: We got along fine.

P: See, one of the reasons I started this project was before my mother died she divided everything up that she had with us. I have some ration books she gave me.

B: I just threw away some.

P: I had no idea what they were for. They had my name on it with different stamps and stuff. I really didn't know what they were for. That is what got me thinking about this, so that is why I started this project. My mother used to have. . . In the front window we had three brothers in the service. She had the three stars and so forth. On the draft board, what do you know about the draft board, or how was the draft done? Can you tell me something about it?

B: Of course Charles was deferred at first because of the two kids. They didn't take family men right away. They took I think single men and men without families

first. He was deferred for a while because of his working at Copperweld and those places. Also when he was working at Hanford in Washington. When we came back here, then of course it was another story. I don't remember where he went back to work. That is a horrible thing to say, but I don't. I know that about that time they were taking men with three kids. He was afraid he was going to be taken. He had had phlebitis when he was in high school and he had always had with that one leg. He was afraid that he couldn't march, so he joined the Navy and went into that.

Because he was an electrician, he had had a couple of years of college. If he had gone in earlier, he might have had a better chance. He went into the radar. He didn't like being away from home. He was very, very homesick. When he first went he had had . . . When he was a kid he went swimming down here in the swimming hole and broke a tooth off. Of course then they put a little pin into the next one, and so his teeth were . . . Over the years he had an extra tooth on pivot and that sort of thing. When he got into the Navy, they decided he ought to have his teeth out. So they took all of his teeth out. He had some out before that, but they took all of those out and they put him in a group of all the men who were . . . What did they call it? Dental unit. Anyway they all needed teeth.

I wrote to him everyday and sometimes twice a day. He wrote to me and I can remember he wrote everyday too. About the second week, he wrote to me and he said, "Since I haven't heard a word from you and I can't understand why, I am not going to write any more." Well, immediately I was up in arms over the whole thing. Why hadn't they got letters? So I telegraphed right away and then I called the Red Cross and said, "My husband is distraught over the fact that I haven't written and I have written everyday." Then they gave him this whole pile of letters. Now what had happened anyway was some business as far as they were concerned. Anyway he got his letters after that.

He was very much a home man and wanted to be with his wife and his children. He was not happy with that. Although he enjoyed some of the work that he did, he is not an enthusiast. He had not been in a fight but once in his life, and was not a belligerent type of person. We never put a star in the window because we were not enthused about the war. Although that was a war that everybody had to be enthused about because it was a danger to our country in that something might happen to us. I think the wars since then have been wars that we could have gotten out of and should have. I never joined the, what do you call it? Women who . . . And my mother-in-law never joined it because her son was in

it. We just never did. Blue Cross, no.

P: Blue Star.

B: Blue Star, didn't do that sort of thing.

P: All right now, let's get back to the home canning. You said that you had done home canning before. In other words then, this really was no problem then as far as extra food.

B: No. We always had a big garden. Mother had a big garden, we had a big garden. Charles always planted enough for anybody that came. He would load the car up and let them take it home. We had lots of food. Now the one thing, I had put aside a can of crab meat that I thought in case somebody would come and I wouldn't have anything on hand. I would use that and make salad or something out of it. That was up in the cupboard. One day while I was over at mother's I guess, the kids got in and opened that up and ate it for lunch or for a snack, which really teed me off because I was saving that, sort of hoarding that, because I was sure I might need that for something else. There was never any great business. We had canned stuff and had lots of food really.

P: I was just wondering, was your boy ever old enough during the war to go to school?

B: No, he was . . . Beth started school when we came back. She was just six then. Well she wasn't six, she was six in December. She was born on Christmas Day. So she was six then, she was already in school. So she was always way ahead of herself. Jamie was not old enough. . . Let's see, she was in second or third grade before he started in school. He was longing to go to school. In fact, after he came home from the first day he said, "I'm not going back!" I said, "Why not?" Because he had been waiting for the whole year before. Every afternoon when she came home he would be waiting up for her. I said, "Why aren't you going back?" and he says, "They didn't even teach me to read." One whole day lost. He wanted to read so badly.

P: Now at school did they do anything . . . Did the children know what was happening or were they pretty much. . .

B: They knew that there was a war going on, but we didn't talk it at home. I don't know why I didn't dwell on that. I spent an awful lot of time writing letters to Charles and they knew that. They knew when he sent things home. I would read the letters to them and he always said something to them in the letters and that

sort of thing. But I really don't know what they thought when he was gone so much at Copperweld. After he went to the war, it seemed that all the men were gone. The other men around seemed to be gone too, although none of our relatives. That is any of his brother-in-laws were gone, but they were older men. I don't really know. I don't think I ever discussed the war with them. If I did, I don't remember. I would have to ask them to know just what we did talk about. We probably talked about the fact that he was gone to help the country. I really don't remember.

P: Now, getting back to something else then. You said you had plenty and I know some people I have talked with said occasionally they would be black market, but I suppose if you had plenty you really had no reason.

B: No, never. I didn't even know where the black market was. I can remember one time Charles' aunt saw a line down in Warren that they were selling something. She got in line, thinking it was blankets or something like that. When she got up to it she found out it was cigarettes, and she didn't smoke. She was a little horrified at the whole thing. I know an aunt of mine in Cleveland wrote to me and said that she bought a couple of blankets because she wanted to get them before the horders got them. It really tickled us because we thought Aunt Amiee was a horder because she got two blankets. We didn't have any problems there.

P: Okay now, when you did get letters from your husband, I know some people told me that they would sometimes censor the letters. Did you ever run across anything like that?

B: Well because it was all in this country, I don't even know whether his letters were censored. I have got all of them. I could go look through them and see. I don't remember that they were censored. He just knew that he wasn't supposed to talk about anything except that . . . And he wouldn't know. An ordinary sailor wouldn't know any . . . It would be men out of the country that I would think would be censored. I don't remember that anything was censored.

P: When you finally had heard that the war was over, when you think back on it, about how long did it take us to go from war production back to more normal condition?

B: I really don't know. I think that there was still some work for a while. It must have been a good bit. I think that they were . . . I can't remember now. Isn't that awful? Charles worked. What he was working on, I don't know. I don't remember whether he was in the mill, or whether he was working in the big plants, or

whether he was working on houses. I know they built a lot of houses afterwards. I hadn't thought about that. I think he was probably working on houses for part of that time. When there were plants going on, he usually was put in one of them because he was a good worker. In fact, one of his bosses told me one time that they hated to put him on as foreman because he was such a good worker that they missed his being a worker. I know he was a general foreman of that sewage disposal plant that they built south of Warren.

P: Oh. I worked on that too. I was really young then. We lied about my age.

B: They put in conduit, and he wanted the angles to all run, when they would go at a corner. If you ever see that, you will see that he went to a high school teacher over in Cortland. Then they figured out a formula of how those all had to be. They were different angles because of the bends. Those are all perfect. He took me down there when they had an open house. I don't know if it was an open house, anyway he took me down to see it. He was very proud of that because he did a lot of very careful work to see that was just right.

P: See my brother dug the ditches they put the pipe in.

B: Oh, did he? Worked for. . .

P: No, actually we worked for the outfit that was from, out of Detroit I think it was. That was my second or third job in construction work. My brother ran the machine and I was his oiler, which meant I stood around and watched him work. That is what oilers or apprentices do, they stand around and collect money for not falling in the hole.

B: And had to learn a little bit of what is going on.

P: That was the first job I had ever gone out on. A long time ago.

B: Charles ran the high rise down in Warren. I came down and watched that. One day they had one of those French cranes that turns around. A couple of his men were coming off the job to walk over to do something else, and that top fell down. It fell right in front of a fellow, and he sent all of his men home. Everybody had the jitters. They were just scared to death. He could have been killed. One step more and he would have been dead, just as sure as anything. So they went home that day, came back the next.

P: That is always a problem with construction work, there is danger.

B: Yes. My father was killed at Chase Brass Company, he was an electrician in Cleveland. He was forty-two when he died. I was worried sick to get Charles through the forties. Once he became fifty I thought, "Smooth sailing now." He was fifty-three when he was killed. People always rave about what high wages they get, but you are taking your life in your hands all the time.

P: You know we did some sewer work, and I helped dig a couple guys out. It got old fast.

B: Yes.

P: Very fast. All right getting back to the war then, when the war was over it took, you can't remember about how long. Did things seem to quickly return to normal or reasonably quick?

B: Reasonably soon I think. I think things went along pretty good for a while, and then things slowed down. I think we went into the . . . Charles didn't work in electrical work all of the time. He and three other friends and relatives went into the concrete block business, and then they made septic tanks. They worked like fools doing that. They worked seven days a week. I would take their Sunday dinner over and we would eat with them over there, because they hardly got home in time to eat at night. It was very hard work. But that was after the war. They decided that they would go into that, and that was a real deal.

We bought a machine to make concrete blocks, and they said that you could make \$100 a day. Never believe anything that anybody tells you about how much you can make on something. We had problems with it. They wanted to use a skimpy amount of cement and my husband was not in favor of the idea. If he built a product, he wanted it to be good. So it always cost them more than they were supposed to use because he used a good amount of cement in it. They did have some that weren't very good, and they replaced them when the other fellows were running it. He built the forms for the concrete septic tanks. They had to be in sections, and then they could collapse and take them out. He always wanted to get a patent on them but some other people stole and patented before we got it.

My husband was a very ingenious soul. I would tell him what I would like him to do, and he would say, "Well, let me think about that." Then he would do it. When I ask somebody now if they will do such and such for me, "Oh, you can't do that." I wasn't used to that. He could do it. It was one of those things.

P: After the war was over, as the people had good wages and so on, I would imagine they had plenty of money saved up. How soon was it you could buy new things like cars and so forth? Was it very soon?

B: We had bought a car before the war. Then we bought a tractor and a car at the same time. That would be about 1948 or 1949, somewhere in there. My brother-in-law was selling tractors and so Charles bought a tractor from him. Then we went into the business. I was wondering if you were going to ask about the Korean War and Vietnam, so I really didn't concentrate too long on the Second World War to know just exactly what we did. I think that probably, maybe a year or so that they . . . As soon as the war ended I think they started changing over. Now how long it took them to change over, I think we got a car in a couple of years.

P: I know, because a couple of people that I have talked with mentioned about how old the cars were getting.

B: Yes, the cars were getting old.

P: Every one had real need for cars.

B: Before that we had had a car every two years. Of course it was a long period in between there.

P: I have down through my questions, can you just give me a . . .

B: A general idea.

P: Yes, just think about a few of the things that maybe you would like to add, an impression of the war.

B: Unlike most people, I thought the war would come along before it did. Back when I was in high school, I was talking to the kids in our Sunday school class about the things that Hitler was doing. Everybody just ha-ha'd at me and said that nothing would come of that. And it did. I was very much upset with some of the things that we heard. I think that a lot of people didn't believe what was going on. They thought that things were, "America gets along fine and we won't have any problems." I think that probably most people didn't think that anyone would ever attack us, as the Japanese did. I think that was the main thing. We just thought that we were so powerful and we are such a big country that nobody would really do anything against us.

P: I know you were saying at the beginning that your husband was working at Copperweld, I believe. You said

that they had already started enlarging the place and so forth. In other words then, when the war started, we didn't start completely unprepared?

B: No, because Roosevelt had lend-lease, I think they called it. They were building up things for over there. I don't know but what maybe our Army was increasing too, and things like that. Things were working towards that. Even though a great many people thought we should stay out of the war. I think a lot of people knew that the way things were going, that it was going to be that way. We were going to have to be in it. We were probably low on manpower to go into a war, but I think we were building up for several years before that to get things going just to help Britain and France.

P: As far as you know there was never much discussion on whose side we should be on, or whether we were right going in or anything like that?

B: No, I don't recall that anybody was. . . I think there was a great reluctance to go into the war, back when the war first started in Europe. I think that a lot of people said that we should stay out and not have anything to do with them at all. They were reluctant as far as that was concerned, but there were still a lot of people who thought that we were going to have to be in it. After the Japanese bombed, I don't think there was anybody who said that we wouldn't be in it.

I can remember, there is a family down the road here who had property in Germany. I have heard people say that somebody landed a plane in their field, and that they were spying. How preposterous in the first place. This is a little plane that they are landing in the field down there. In the first place, their fields were growing stuff. Just this crazy idea that because they were German, they must be doing something subversive. I just couldn't see that in the first place. I couldn't see how you were going to have somebody landing in a plane on there and their getting information back to Germany. The planes didn't fly to Europe before the war. That was one of the things that came about at that time.

P: So there were a few people who thought there were, perhaps, spies and stuff.

B: Oh, yes. I know there were some people who talked about them because they were German.

P: I didn't realize. I knew that we had thrown the Japanese in the internment camps, but I didn't realize that there had been any feelings towards the Germans or the

Italians.

B: That is the only one that I know. When we live in Warren, the family next door to us were Italian. I never heard anything said about them. For one thing, I was so busy with my family then that I. . . And I didn't have the car a lot of the time, and I didn't get around. When I did go, I would come out to see my mother-in-law. For a while, if I wanted to do anything in Warren I would have to bring the kids out here and leave them with her, and then go and do whatever I had, and then come and get them. Because gasoline was not that plentiful that you would run around all the time. So we didn't do too much of that.

P: I take it then you could drive?

B: Oh, yes.

P: Was that unusual for a woman to drive?

B: I have driven ever since I was twelve years old.

P: The reason I asked you is because my mother . . .

B: Didn't drive?

P: I shouldn't say this, she was about forty when she tried to learn to drive. She got a license, but she never really could drive. She could make the car go, somewhat.

B: It was not unusual here. My sister-in-law drove, my mother-in-law didn't, but all of the people around here that . . . My mother-in-law's sister drove. Of course Charles' father had been dead for a good many years and she didn't have access to a car. No, I think most of the women that I knew . . . Now I suppose a lot of the people in the city wouldn't drive because there are other means of transportation. When you live in the country; if you don't drive, you don't go any place. So that is just one of those things. Of course Charles' mother had . . . His sister lived here before we came, and she had her sister. So she got things done. My mother could drive. She drove back during World War I, back before my father and she split up, she drove. She never drove later on.

P: When I was a kid most of the women that I knew didn't drive. Of course we lived in the city. See this is a different world.

B: Yes. I lived in the city until I was married. Well, my folks were divorced before I was in kindergarten. When I was in first grade, my father got me, which is a

great wonder of the world because they didn't do that in those days. My mother always said that my father bribed the judge to let him have me. Anyway, I lived with him until he died in 1930. Then I lived with my aunt who had been . . . I mean my aunt, my grandmother, and I lived with my father. After he died we lived alone for a while and then the two of us. . . (My grandmother died.) They brought my grandfather up and then we moved into . . . My grandfather had been living in the west for years and years and years. He went out there and had a run on the Cherokee strip, Oklahoma. He got land. They came back, and then he went back again. My grandmother was supposed to go back again, but she didn't like the west so she stayed here with her kids. Anyway, we went and lived with another aunt and uncle. Then I went to live with my mother when I was fourteen.

P: Your remembrance of the war is in that really it was a war, like that one man has written a book called The Last Good War. Most of the people that I have talked to, this is how they remember it. Plenty of work, unless you had somebody killed or something.

B: Well, we knew there were people being killed, and that was a sad business. It seemed that it was necessary. It seemed like the world had to have this, somebody to stop Hitler, because it looked like he was just gobbling a little bit and a little bit, and that eventually it would be us against him if he took England.

Of course the Russians got out of the war. They were hanging on by a toenail because he had . . . Like Napoleon, Hitler went on to Moscow, but he didn't get there. The Russian winter is always their best adversary, best aid rather. There was the danger. I think by that time the Japanese had gone in with them, and there was a danger that they would take the world. The South American countries were all weak. At least it seemed to us that they were. Now I don't know whether they were or not, but they didn't have too much influence on things. We felt that Hitler would really take over if we didn't do something about it. I think even after Pearl Harbor, when everybody was gung ho about the war, even so the big push was to take care of Europe first. Because if he could get a toehold in England and take that over, that it would be almost impossible to fight a war from here against a continent.

P: Yes, a lot of problems.

B: It wasn't until later that you developed the planes that could fly, you could do that. There you had to have some place, a base, that you could work on. I

think that the wars since then have been a great mistake.

P: Okay. Well, I have run out of questions here unless you would like to add something extra?

B: I can't think of anything else.

END OF INTERVIEW