

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War 1939-1945 - Women

Personal Experience

O H 907

CAROL SCHAFFER MILLS

Interviewed

by

Janice Cafaro

on

November 11, 1985

C This is an interview with Carol Schaffer Mills for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on World War II Women, by Janice Cafaro, on November 11, 1985, at 342 Hilton Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio, at 3 00pm

Could you tell me a little bit about your parents and your family?

M My parents were both born in a small coal mining town in Pennsylvania, and their names were Myrtle Vive Gabrielson and Frank Roosevelt Schaffer. The town was called Valier. A lot of people came there to work because there were functioning coal mines in town. The one side of the family was more scholarly and seemed to be striving after education, and that was stressed, reading books and learning things. The Schaffer side, and the Gabrielson side was just like always having fun. I grew up with a strange conflict where I always liked to go over to the Gabrielson place better because you were always allowed to play games and run and play tag and go and pick berries and chase down to the creek and swim in the creek and take the animals for walks and go and milk the cows, everything was made fun when there were a lot of chores. I learned a lot about rural life I guess, but at my Grandpa Schaffer's, you always had to be very, very quiet. I remember he never talked very much. He always used to tell me, "Don't step on the lettuce." I remember that very clearly. He did not have many conversations with me.

I remember that we would spend a lot of time in Valier, Pennsylvania in the summers. We went back to be with our grandparents and to roam free every summer. But then my dad moved to Youngstown, Ohio in 1924 when we was twenty-two years old to get work. There was work here in certain factories like Commercial Shearing and some of those mills and the rubber plants nearby. He worked in a series of places like that, and he got a job in one of the rubber plants near Akron. Then he married my mother and brought her out from Valier. She came to Youngstown, Ohio, and they lived on the north side in Rooming houses.

They did not have a car. I know my mother always wanted a car. I remember that being one of my most vivid memories of my childhood is how envious I was of other children's fathers who had cars and got to go places.

C You had to go on the bus everywhere and walk?

M The bus and walk, yes. I can still remember the cold standing down on Federal Street waiting on the buses to come when we went to a show and jumping up and down and wiggling around to keep your legs from getting cold, waiting, and waiting on the buses all the time.

I remember going out to see the Christmas tree lights with other people in the backs of their cars, and I always wanted to be able to go in my own car and go and look at the Christmas tree lights. I really resented that we did not have a car. I do not know why that affected me so badly. I always vowed that when I grew up, I would have a very big fancy car, but it did not turn out that way.

During the Depression which I guess I was born on January 7, 1933, I was born

like at the height of the Depression. My sister was born in 1927 in September, Barbara Louis Schaffer. The I was born on Albeit Court which is a tiny little street on the south side of Youngstown down by the South Side Hospital vicinity by Oak Hill. I do not think the hospital could have been thriving at the time. Not many people went to the hospital then to have their babies, especially when there were not any big incomes. I know that my dad was off work, on and off and doing all kinds of jobs. I remember a newspaper dated sometime about 1936 with me sitting on his lap, there is a picture and my sister is behind him on the steps at Olivette Court. It said, "Veterans get their long overdue checks." That was 1936 in this old photo that I remember looking at in the album so many times and my mother explained to me what the war was.

We never owned a home, we rented. I remember that where we lived was the strongest arrangement of people. I was just like three or four. I can remember vividly being on that street and peoples names, like Mrs. Money, Nancy Skip, and the Hellman's, which was a big brood of children whose father was always drinking. Anna McCorn and her mother who lived next door, who used to take me next door for treats. My mother seemed to have a very jolly personality. I always remember her singing and whistling. This was in the height of the Depression and then toward the declining years, obviously.

The children just all played out in the streets with whatever they had to play with. It was kind of a protected little street because it was a cul-de-sac, so you could not get hurt there because there was no traffic going around it. I think that must have helped. It was like a five room house, but it was skinny. It was one of these old-fashioned, wooden, Depression houses that area really skinny.

My father got a job with an insurance company called Prudential while we lived there. We moved from that house in 1937. We moved to Avondale, which was up further on the South Side in a much better neighborhood. We rented a big, cozy house directly across the street from Taft School. All I had to do was open my front door and walk across the street and go in the front door of the school. It was a wonderful place, by Gibson Avenue.

There was a big sled hill at the corner of Avondale and Gibson. The way children played then was that everybody was just put out on your own, and you made your own amusement. If you were lucky enough to have a sled, you shared with everybody. Not everybody had their own private sled and their own pair of ice skates. It was just unheard of to have that mush stuff in the neighborhoods I was growing up in. That was not a slum, that was a nice, pleasant, upper Southside neighborhood. This must have 1938 or 1939 because the fact that it was new and I knew that the Monopoly game was fifty years old this year in 1985. Our neighbors, the LaVogue's had the Monopoly game. It was like a wondrous thing. I was not allowed to play. I watched everybody play. Kids would play this game for ten hours at a time.

C Really?

M Yes, go without eating and sit out on the front porches. In the winter, they would play it in the dining rooms. It seemed like everybody had a dining room then in

their house. Then, finally, I got considered old enough that I was allowed to play Monopoly, which was just a big thrill.

Everything that I remember is like associated with [the fact] that there was not much money. Then some wonderful thing would happen. We took a border in, and my mother was real happy because that meant we would have more money. Other people would criticize my mother for feeding the bums. They would say, "You should not be doing that. If he wanted a job, he could have one." I think how hard it must have been during the Depression because we had that American work ethic that was, if you had a job, you were good and if you did not have a job, you were bad and lazy. Maybe that is why the Depression left such a scar on so many people. To be out of work was really shameful, it was not only hard on you, but fingers were pointed at you. Mother was very generous.

We moved to a street called Lucius on the upper South Side. Lucius Avenue was by Rush Boulevard. This was around 1938 to 1939. I only lived slightly less than two years on Avondale. Then we left this pretty house, and we went to live on Philadelphia Avenue with this old man named Harry Warrenfelts. My mother was like his maid, we became like his servant family. I am sure that my dad was supposed to participate in this. My dad did utterly nothing, my mother did it all. She cut the grass, she fixed the flower bed, she did the washing, she did the cooking, and she had that when she became pregnant in 1940 with her third child. I was eight years old in the beginning of 1941.

My mother was supposed to keep house for Harry Warrenfelts and we could have rent free by sharing the house. I guess, my mother and dad did odd jobs to get the rest of the money. I was only eight when we moved there. We left the other house just after World War II started.

I remember Sundays. I could always smell roast beef cooking real plainly and pies that smell lingering in the air and the baseball games or football games or whatever was on the radio being broadcasted and the droning announcers voice. All of the sudden everybody ran outside and said that the Japanese, the Japanese who we hardly knew anything about then, had attacked Pearl Harbor. I did not know what Pearl Harbor was. Then we found out all of the sudden the Japanese were our enemies, and that we were supposed to hate the Japanese and that we were going to get them. President Roosevelt was going to declare war, and the Japanese were getting together with the Germans, and we were going against them. The English were our friends. My dad loved the English. He was always sitting around talking about the English during that year before the bombing. As I grew up I realized that they had held off Hitler by themselves during a whole year. He was a great Anglophile and instilled that in me because I heard it all the time. At the time everybody loved the Russians. They were considered our wonderful allies who were going to defeat the Nazis.

Everything changed abruptly from then on. My dad then got more overtime in the mill. They wanted to move away from Harry's house. We had to stay there long enough so that she could ride the bus down. We moved in the summer of 1942. I recall there were posters, not posters but placards, on the bus sides. They had pictures of Japanese people with squinty eyes and big buck teeth and said, "Beware of the yellow peril." I

remember that so plainly "Loose lips, sinks ships," that was one of them, not to talk while you were at the steel mill, not to talk while you were at the job. They had pictures of men with welding hats on and a Jap hiding underneath. There were all kinds of wartime propaganda posters out.

C Did they have them on the buses?

M The buses particularly, I recall. I rode the buses constantly. In school we were inundated with this information. I was nine years old.

C In your history class?

M We did not have a history class, we did not have history classes. I was in the fourth grade. That year in 1942 we moved over to Evergreen Avenue near Oak Hill. It was a beautiful tree line street then. We had a much bigger apartment. My parents were thrilled. All of the sudden nobody could find an apartment. There was not any place to be had. I guess it was because of the influx of soldiers and sailors who were being drafted. They were all getting married at one time and scooping up the apartments. It was real hard to find places to live.

During the war, Daddy would have to work overtime. Then pretty soon, everybody started arguing about going in a car-pool because there was rationing on the gas. They would take turns in the car-pool. There were always arguments over the ration stamps and having enough to get the butter. We were always running out of butter stamps because that was rationed, and shoes were rationed I think. Gasoline was rationed, and nobody could buy a car. So the people who did not have a car just could not ever get one. Then it became even more paramount in our survival to have rides all the time. We had to beg other people. When I say beg, I am being flamboyant. To me it was like begging. Everything was asking somebody else or riding the bus, which I would rather do than go in their cars. I would like to be warm to go and look at the Christmas lights, but I hated to have to go with these other people.

The guys from my dad's mill would come and talk about the women working with them and grumble. They would say, "It must have been the wartime women workers."

C Why were they grumbling?

M They said that they did not know how to do anything. They would talk about it. There were fights. The women were jealous that the men were working with women in the mills. The wives were jealous. I remember the gussy girls got jobs in the mills. My mother would call them tramps because they were working with the men. This caused a great emotional problem for those wives who were home with their babies. Here are these young girls in the mills. I am sure sociologically that it affected a lot of people's marriages.

C The men worked in the army, and the ones who were left were at a premium, were they not?

M Right Say if you were thirty and the draft age was twenty-six or maybe you were twenty-eight or had a bad arm or something, or otherwise you would have rent, you would have been in demand, so I am sure that it changed a lot of things

Everybody had stars in their windows to say if there was a boy in the service from that house My mother talked about the baby that she had who had died when he was one day old and how he would have been in the army if he had been alive She always talked about him She would say that he would have been sent to the war anyway

At school, I remember being taught songs like "Anchors Away" and the "Marine Hymn" We had to learn every branch of the army's song Then I think we sang then every morning. When we moved over there, I left Taft School which I adored When I got to this other school, Delson on the South Side, it seemed gloomy and dreadful to me I hated it there My parents fought more, all my little friends were gone, the war was on, there was not enough food You could not get anything There were the ration stamps if there were enough ration stamps, and there never were.

C What did you do when you ran out off stuff?

M You just did without I remember eating Spam. I hated it We had something called danish dessert There was never enough sugar. I think sugar had to be rationed Then when you got to have sugar for pies, it was a momentous occasion

My cousin Barney went into the Navy; then cousin Jack went into the Army, cousin Benny went into the Air Force. I remember everybody was really thrilled Benny, Jack, and Barney all went into the different branches of the service During the war we could not go visit their family anymore because we did not have any gasoline Everybody would be trading stamps back and forth and cheating obviously and sneaking to get gas, or I will trade you my butter stamps and my food stamps for my car, then I will give you a ride That was how everybody did it That went on all the time. I am sure that it went on everywhere At higher levels it was bigger pay

During the war my Uncle Pular, my sister, me, my brother, my mother, and my father crowded into this two bedroom apartment Uncle Pular had an old Model T Ford that he had had since the middle of the 1930's They would all make these trades and deals back and forth and get enough gasoline for the momentous occasional trip back to Valier to visit the relatives

The amusement of the males was drinking. They did not go out and play polo or stuff; they got drunk That was what they did for recreation.

C Would you say it increased during the war years?

M Yes My dad's drinking did I think there was some kind of rationing on whiskey, was there not? How they got away with drinking everyday in the bars, I do not

know. They would stop on paydays for beer and stuff.

When we went over to visit our relatives, people would always be talking about so and so in Belgium and somebody else would be in Italy. I remember between my Uncle Whitey and my cousins Barney, and Benny, and Jack, they were in the entire European theater of the war. I can remember them mentioning those names. Italy, Belgium, France, England, and I think Holland that I recall them talking about. I do not know if Uncle Whitey was hurt, but Benny and Jack were hurt badly. Benny was a bombardier, and he dropped so many bombs that to this day he came back to Valier to live as a recluse. He was as handsome as a movie star when he went in and a very talented artist, and he lives back there in a log cabin that he built on the top of a hill with a goat herd. He has lived back there as a recluse since 1945.

C Shell shocked?

M Just really depressing. He is out of it now. He will talk to you like he will talk to me. He gets a pension. When he came home from the war, he was like twenty-three and his life was over. He did not want to talk. He just wanted to stay there. He had a brilliant future ahead of him, college scholarships galore, and he just turned into a Howard Hughes type person. He is still there to this day, collecting his pension. He never goes out with anybody. He sits in his house and listens to the radio. His dad, who had the drill thing, got him working again. The family was very badly affected by the war. All three boys were in the war. And the three girls were dating boys who were in the war. My sister was old enough to date sailors and soldiers.

I loved sailors. I thought they were the most glamorous looking people I ever saw. When I was like nine years old and ten years old and a sailor would come to our house to take my sister out, I would just stand in the corner and stare at the eagles, and the uniform, stare at the stripes on the collars and the stars and the white and the way they bent it and look at their polished black shoes and stare at their bell bottoms and memorize them. I thought that was the most beautiful thing I ever saw in the world, a sailor. I wanted to be as old as my sister. I would say, "Hope the war does not end until I get to be big enough to go out with a sailor." That is true.

Since all of these people were dating so much, there was an urgency about it that I recall. I was always sent to their house to be the baby-sitter. My sister was seventeen years old when the war ended. So when she was fifteen and sixteen years old and after the war, seventeen and eighteen, she was dating all of these fellows. Their sisters and so forth were married and they had servicemen. I remember there always being people in uniforms in our house constantly. I had to be the baby sitter. I just felt like a drudge. My job was just take the babies. I would get like fifty cents a night to watch two and three children. I was twelve when the war ended. So this was when I was ten and eleven that I did a lot of this baby sitting.

One drunken soldier used to bring me home on his furlough on his motorcycle, which was an unusual thing to have then. This drunken soldier who smelled real bad of

booze would bring this little eleven-year-old girl home on a motorcycle. These guys were always drunk, and their wives had these big gardenias and things in their hair and high heels with sequins and palm trees coming up the dresses. They dressed up like that just to go out to a bar during the war. They dressed really glamorously. Very few people wore slacks since they were just coming into style. My sister had beautiful clothes because she got a job at Bell Telephone when she got out of South High School. She wore all of these sequin dresses, and then I started stealing her crepe blouses and wearing them to school.

During the war, there was propaganda with a soldier home from the war who was having a Camel. There was a sign that said, "Lucky Strike goes to war." The color of the pack changed to green. It was like patriotic to smoke. This was the kind of sheer propaganda they perpetrated on people. It was considered very knowing and grown up if you drank and smoked. I wanted to be that way, so I wore my sister's sequin clothes and I would go into a bar when I was fifteen after the war, sit down in a cocktail dress, and say, "Give me a double Manhattan please." I did that, and I was a very smart girl but no one was supervising me.

I think this lackadaisical attitude happened to my family during the war. The Second World War just drastically changed the face of America to me way more than World War I had. Everybody had other pursuits. The women went off and worked and found they really liked it and never wanted to come back and sit in a house.

C. Although it was put forth as patriotic duty to get a job.

M. Sure, yes. As I think on those days my mother did not work, but a lot of her friends did. She did not work outside the house. Then when the war came to an end, she had to go get a job because my dad's salary went back down. He must have been getting all the overtime. Everybody was broke. But during the war I can remember nothing of those four years but being just brainwashed. Even at school you learned all of the patriotic songs. You learned of the army songs, you sang all of the navy songs. They taught you. They showed you on maps where the soldiers were fighting, like you really cared. You saved all of your gum wrappers and wrapped them in balls, you saved string, tin cans and smashed them and carted them to school in your brother's wagon, for the war effort, they called it. You had to have victory gardens as they called them. Mr Franklin, our mean landlord who lived under us, did not allow us to have a victory garden and dig up his back yard. I was real ashamed because we did not have a victory garden. People who lived by me on Evergreen Avenue made fun of us because we did not have a victory garden.

C. You were the only ones on the street?

M. That I knew. I am sure there were others. But in my tiny little world, I was made to feel odd because I was not growing vegetables for the war. Kids five and six



were trained to think about the war effort. At school you took your pennies and your dimes and you bought defense stamps, which then, if you saved enough, you got a bond. You turned your book of defense stamps to save toward a bond. Then the kids with more money would say, "I have four war bonds." They would brag that their mommy and daddy bought them a bond. Or you gave them bonds for Christmas and birthday gifts. I would be lucky like if I got five defense stamps in eight months. They cost ten cents a piece, and they had the minute man standing on them. You pasted them in this book and traded them in.

I recall going to see "The Sullivans" which was a movie about five brothers who all joined the Navy and got killed. In the end they march up into the sky. Everybody was sobbing and crying. Then there was "Forty Seconds Over Tokyo." There were countless war movies where these heroes, the Americans, went and killed bad Nazis and the bad Japs.

- C When did these movies start? At the beginning of the war? Or when did they crest?
- M I remember seeing most of those films from like 1942 through 1945. All the time I was going to pictures. The service was involved in everything like, "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek" had the subject matter of a girl who had sextuplets and was not married. But the thing of that one was that her husband was off in the Navy. There was the "Human Comedy" with Van Johnson, Butchie Jenkins, Faye Bantar that was about this family where Van Johnson goes off to war. You just felt really badly about the troop trains. I think he, the oldest son, gets killed. "Since You Went Away" was another with Shirley Temple and Guy Massaly who was a sailor.
- C All of these movies had a message?
- M Oh, yes. "The Best Years of Our Lives" came out after the war and was with a war theme of rehabilitating the soldiers after the war and getting them back into the mainstream of society. An amputee, Howard Russell, was featured in it, which was a real big publicity gambit of the day to have this World War II amputee in this movie. It was highly lauded. I went to all of those. You were constantly on the radio and everything, subjected to patriotic songs. Kate Smith would sing, "God Bless America". America lost its innocence in World War II, and it never got it back, I do not think.
- C Now that is interesting. Why do you feel that?
- M I know I lost my innocence and I was a child. I think my parents lost theirs and my grandparents. Up to that time, this baby country still had really strong ideas like in World War I we did not lose them completely, even in the Civil War with all that ripping apart of families and really brother against brother as they say. The belief in an idealistic good and evil. I do not think it was ever the same after.

World War II I think the evidence of that is the totally different attitude toward Vietnam War Just look at the difference from 1945 or, say, 1941 when World War II started, and 1963 when we started, twenty some years later, sending people and advisors over to Vietnam forcing people to get into the Army and dragging them by their feet and people running away to Canada There was no patriotism at all left, and we did not care about foreign soil and we did not want to go So much of it turned out to be a lie, did it not? We did not save the world for democracy

C Right

M Our allies were not our allies. They turned Here are the Russians This was just pushed at you with the newsreels when you went to movies I saw too many, maybe that is why Maybe other kids do not feel the same way because they did not go to as many shows as I did, but if you went to a show, you saw two or three previews. Most of the time at most theaters it was a serial, a cartoon, and the news You saw that all the time, the newsreels You would see Stalin talking with Roosevelt Now you find out that they are not our friend, they are our enemy I think that was a big thing All of the sudden, after being trained to adore Joseph Stalin all during the early 1940's, then we are told he is our enemy By 1953, which I think is the year he died, he is a mortal enemy and we are hating him The Italians, of course, changed sides there There was a lot of discrepancy about that They taught us that in school They talked more about that sort of thing than they do now I do not think they teach children at that young of an age as much as. It was not out of books; they just talked about it in the classrooms The mothers and the fathers and the neighbors and their relatives and the friends would sit around talking about the war I remember this Instead of sitting there and playing in the grave, listening to my Aunt Emma talking to my mother because her husband was away in the war. They would be talking about when they thought it would be over and how far they were going to get and Guada Canal The women talked about it too, they were very involved in it. They did not just talk about making cup cakes You were imbued with a sense of patriotism. Everybody seemed to have that feeling

C Why do you think? Because we were attacked, perhaps?

M. Yes, and then we were over propagandized to react to it That attack really caught America off guard I think it embarrassed us too, in a way To this day, when I see the wonderful smiling pictures of the Japanese with all of their mills and everything taking our cars, I feel a surge of bitter anger with them They are the yellow Peril who we are supposed to have hated, and we went over and gave them a whole new industry I still to this day do not understand why we renovated their mills and taught them all our secrets

C: I think the thought was so that they would not rise and be aggressive again since they had their own industry

M: I think they were good buffers too. Buffers on against China which we were really worried about after the war. The Japs are good buffers over there, and the Germans are good buffers for Russia. So we have built up both countries and now we do not have any industries in those fields like we should have.

When I went to go see that movie, "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek", you saw the newsreels first. When it came on, what appeared to be all these piles of wood were in this snowy place. A man was talking were dead people. They were piled up like logs. It said that they were the Jews. It was at the Jewish concentration camps.

I read the paper sometimes. It showed once Chinese mother nursing her baby at her bosom and she had a big bullet hole in the other part of her chest. They were both dead. I was so afraid of that picture. I was only eight then. It was right when the war started. China was being attacked by Japan. We still lived on Philadelphia. I would sneak downstairs and look in the pile of papers and stare at that and wonder if that could be possible since it was a little baby. I wondered why nobody stopped them.

Then there was the scene of those famous placards that I told you about on the bus. This is still a very famous war logo. You would find it in any parts of the war. It was a Chinese baby, lightly clad, screaming at the railroad tracks all covered with blood. He is wounded and he is all alone. That was on the bus. Then I got where I did not want to go anywhere on the bus because I had to look at all the pictures. So this little Chinese baby on the tracks was one of those that when I would ride downtown with my mother as she was nursing the baby, then I would always think of that other baby nursing off of his mother who were dead. I would relate them and think, what if my brother was dead, what if my mother was dead? I would brood upon this as a child and never, never talk about it.

C: How come?

M: I was mad at my father because he did not stop the war. I wanted him to do something or the preacher at the church, the men. I wanted the men to stop it or President Roosevelt. Why did President Roosevelt not stop the war? Why did they not just stop the Japanese? Why did they not stop Hirohito and Hitler and Mussolini? They taught us these names.

So then it became something that I was ashamed of. I thought it was somehow part of my fault. If somebody was not doing something about it, then why could I not do something about it? What could I do? I started to be in a fantasy world of bombing the Japs. Instead of playing with my dolls I played bombing Hitler and machine gunning Mussolini. That is what I would play by myself. I did not play these games with other children. No one knew I did this. That was how much it was on my mind after I saw the Jewish pictures. I also had nightmares about those bodies, those Jews in those ovens piled up, for twenty years. They were horrible nightmares where I would wake up screaming out loud. I became obsessed about them and thought about them all the time.

I thought about how I would set the Jews free. Then I would go to Sunday School and ask questions about the Jews. I would ask why they hated the Jews. I thought there was a definite reason for this. I wondered why Jesus did not stop them from killing the Jews. They would never give me a straight answer at church. What answer was there? I cannot get one to this day.

I would never ask anybody at home about why they killed the Jews, because I was embarrassed because somehow, it was their fault. They were letting them get away with it and they were not even doing anything about the Jews or the Chinese baby. Then I was just mad at them. I know I never said it out loud.

C No, but they were your authority figures, so it was up to them to do it.

M And not me ask them, they were supposed to do it. During the war years, there was always somebody at our table having coffee. My mother would be baking a cake or baking them something to eat. I do not know where she got the ration stamps, but there was always someone there constantly.

When the war was nearing the end, my sister was out working in Vadel's restaurant where all the soldiers and sailors went. That was in 1945. She would take me there. Everybody hung out there, all the servicemen and all the girls flirting with them. She would take her little twelve-year-old sister up there. I would wash dishes in the kitchen while my sister was all dressed up in her glamorous blouses, sitting outside. She also was helping them cook at this restaurant. The Vadel Family used her, and I was their free baby sitter and dishwasher.

These wives, as I remember, from the end of the war, were very wild. I am sure there was not an equal number, but some, that were at church saying to be true to their husbands. The ones that I remember were dressed up.

C Now their husbands were away?

M Yes. Whole bunches of them, their husbands were away, and they were out with their boyfriends. Then when their husbands came home, they just, usually with just as much gaiety, went out with their husbands. I was thrust right into this. I would be baby-sitting.

Leg make-up was a great big thing during World War II. You painted your legs with a sponge. Did you know that?

C No.

M It was a whole big phenomena. Nylons were gone, they were for our boys in the service. Nylon was needed. You could not go out with bare legs, so you painted your legs brown with this make-up. Everybody wore that. It became one of the biggest fads of the war. This was not an isolated fad, this was quite, quite popular. Excessive make-up was advocated for all of the girls. Advertisements consisted of pictures of sailors standing behind these glamorous girls who were

putting on eye make-up

C I wonder why make-up emerged to such a big commodity?

M A glamour thing I do not know why the war brought that one, but I remember everybody was made-up all the time. Girls started carrying make-up kits, even kids my age. Before that I do not remember anybody having anything but lipstick. Then all of the sudden it just got real out of hand. There were big, black eyebrows and long eyelashes and curling your hair and putting them up in coffee cans. Coffee got rationed. Coffee cans, things that, you fold over and made out off wire like you have in cookies today, you rolled those, and those were curlers. The metals for curlers was not allowed to be made, it was being made for tanks. You were told that the curlers were being used to make tanks for our boys. Everything was said like that. It was overdramatized for the war effort. It was patriotic and somehow it became patriotic to wear leg make-up, which was just a rip off. Then it got all over the sailor's and soldier's uniforms. People would put out sheets and things on their couches when girls sat down because it would just rub off.

I remember vividly the day President Roosevelt died in April of 1945, just before V-E Day or just after. He died April 12, 1945. It must have been that same week of V-E Day. I was baby-sitting. His dad was not in the service. He had gotten out somehow. He was in and out. He was not injured. I was going on my way to their house and somebody said, "President Roosevelt just died." I thought, who was going to stop Hitler then? I took it very personally. I did not understand. Roosevelt was dead, and my father would not do anything. No one would do anything. I thought no one cared. Everybody was heart broken, people were crying on the streets and sobbing. I had to go and baby-sit that night, and I did not want to go. I cried all night because they were talking about it on the radio.

There was never any money. It seemed like there was money sometimes, but there were not any stamps. You could not get things. Then, after the war, there was not any money again. Then my mother got a job and things got better. She went to McKelvey's.

When the war ended, they had rented me out this time for a whole week to be a baby-sitter. I was given to a relative of Aunt Marie's to be the baby-sitter for these two young couples who had gone up for the week to rent a cottage. My job was to take care of the babies and then at night just sit in the house while they all went out and frolicked. I was twelve years old.

One day I was going down the street from a movie, and the war was over. It was V-J Day, and the war was over. Everybody was yelling and hollering and celebrating and screaming. It was in August of 1945, and the whole war had ended.

C Did you believe it was over?

M I just remember being real happy I think I felt better when the Europe part was over. When the Europe part was over, you knew When V-E Day was over and after D-Day in 1944 They taught us kids this every day in school. We knew about D-Day We knew about V-E Day and V-J Day V-J Day was when the war ended in August. Once the war ended in Europe, you knew the war was going to end with the Japanese It was like a given Everybody was happy, but I am saying that we beat them. We had a real sense of "we" "We" are winning the war, the Americans Nobody ever said anything against the government, the war, the president, the Army, the Navy, the Marines, the Boy Scouts Just everybody was loyal If there would have been somebody saying some political thing against it, they would have beaten him to a pulp Everybody cared about the war, and the magazines were all geared to that Like I said there were soldiers and sailors smoking cigarettes and saying, "When I get home, I always kiss my wife first, then I light up a Camel "

C Talk about the propaganda.

M It was just sickening propaganda Now if that is not propaganda, what is? I think they carried it all through the war very prominent.

C What about the men who did not go to the war? How did the population view them?

M I cannot say for the whole population, but in my tiny world the movies even portrayed how the men who did not go to war were laughed at like the characters in "The Miracle at Morgan's Creek" and other plays like that or movies If you did not go to the war because you had an injury or a bad heart or some such thing, people scorned you That came across in a lot of films at the time as I remember. On our street, most of the young men I remember did go to the service, but there were inevitable ones who did not I cannot remember their names except that they were like nonentities, not that that would be the word that anyone would use at the time The boys who worked in an Italian restaurant, one of them was not in the war, but he could not because he was sickly They were really considered to be pitiable because they did not get to go to defend the country. They were either pitiable or you scorned them, or the guys who were just a little bit too old You just were not considered to be patriotic if you did not get into that army, you were supposed to want to leave your wife and baby behind and go, or babies Many fathers and sons joined up together Then they made that law where no one could have more than two family members because I think all five Sullivan brothers died

In the Vietnam War twenty years later [it was the opposite].

C Just the opposite.

M The exact opposite That struck me I compared these attitudes of these people rushing off to be in the war. I never remember one soldier or sailor who came to our house or air force man. A lot of them came because I had a teen age sister and her girlfriends who dated them, plus a lot of young male relatives of mine who came to our house on their furloughs and stuff, never do I ever remember any of them in any way making any kind of defamatory remark about the government, the general, the sergeants, their platoon, their battalion, saying, "I do not care if we win or not " It was just unthinkable No one would have ever said it.

C They did not complain about that?

M I think they complained in their letters that they would like more cookies and things like that

C That is so far removed from what they should be complaining about.

M Right Now I remember when the letters came, they would read them out loud Jack and Whitey and Barry and Benny wrote letters Those were four letters in the family coming to our house You always put on the back of the envelope S W A K., sealed with a kiss, that was very popular in World War II Girls put their lip prints on the back of the air mail envelopes. You bought a lot of air mail envelopes which were real tissue like They were the kind you had to send them, the mail to the soldiers in, the army personnel. Sometimes you could not know where they were located, like my cousin Jack who was somewhere in Italy We did not know the exact locations because they were strategic secrets.

There wee very many ridiculing songs that children my age sang, like about Hitler and Hirohito and Mussolini. They were a little vulgar ditties that we learned at school and in the school yard.

C Remarks?

M Yes. We sang about them all the time. I got to the point where I did not like to go to the movies with my parents because I was afraid that more newsreels would come on and that I would see more dead people I could not stand to look at them, and I did not want to tell. It was an unspeakable subject right to this day that I do not know why I could not say, "Why do you not do something?" Which was what I wanted them to do

C Without you saying anything

M I wanted them to do it; then they were just supposed to, and I was not supposed to say anything The serviceman a lot of times, I remember, since Youngstown was a major change point, I guess, in the transportation system of the day, some of

them my mother would put up on the couch once in a while I guess they were friends of the family or relatives They would sleep in the living room I can remember that, too. My mother would make a big breakfast She was always very gregarious

I guess the shortage and stuff as much as they talked about them, I never remember going hungry or never remember not having enough to eat I remember a lot of times talking about ration books and saving all the string and hauling all of the tin cans and foil paper and not having the nylons, but no one really worried about it It was just a way of life I never remember going without food and being starving You were always told, "Think how lucky you are," and that the kids in Europe were going hungry and did not have any food and they were being bombed.

There was a wild patriotism in our particular family, for the English who were suffering so with all of the bombing raids in Britain that were mentioned a lot I seem to remember seeing everyone sitting around the dining room table on Evergreen Avenue, the adults and the children alike The children would be playing with something, and the adults would be having discussions about the war I do not know if that was normal in all households or not, I think there were a lot of these heated discussions that were going on I remember something right after the war My father was saying something about the Russians to someone bad, and somebody really got mad He, for some reason, suspected the Russians, which later turned out to be true I cannot remember that argument I do not think my mother was ever that much interested She cared more about the poor boys in the service and the young guys who were being killed and coming home with wounds and being mustered out because they had been hurt in one of the campaigns

Children were constantly being made aware of this The war was just part of your life at school and at home You were not shielded out of it I do not remember children in the Vietnam War acting that way either. They went through that holding their fingers up for peace, making the peace V Winston Churchill's V for victory was a big symbol that everyone did. They made their two fingers into a V, and he was wildly loved by everybody. Winston Churchill was a hero during World War II And General Eisenhower. There was even a fad formed after him called the Eisenhower jacket It buttoned at the waist All the girls wore them They buttoned at the waist, and they were in colors. My sister had like a coal one. It became a very popular item of women's clothing.

Right after the war I remember when I was like thirteen and fourteen years old on Veteran's Day, young girls my age were sent downtown, given an egg basket full of crepe paper poppies. It was called Poppy Day, and you sold poppies to people for what ever money they would give you to turn into the veterans. You volunteered to do that You would go downtown like at 8 00 in the morning and worked until 6 00 We all did it It was considered something that you were supposed to do The thing was that there were so many poppy girls, it was really hard to sell We would try to act older and put more lipstick on so that we could get more boys to buy poppies and men

At the end of the war, as I was telling you I spent V-J Day at the lake with that family who are relatives of my Aunt Marie's They went out on this great celebration and



they were talking about this bomb. It just did not make sense to me what they meant by an atomic bomb. I do not think anyone conceived of it. There was very little publicity told us of how devastated all the people were. It just said that they surrendered because this bomb had leveled their two cities.

C And that was it?

M Yes, and we did not see newsreels or things of these people being scarred.

C Now that is surprising.

M If there were such things, I was not taken to them. I just did not see them.

C Yes, they were not there.

M They were not available to be seen.

C Right.

M They were not going to show the American public the devastation that occurred from that bomb. I do not think that was done. I knew about this horrible new thing called an atomic bomb, and it made the Japs surrender and we got them and everybody said all that. But the human personal element of it was not talked to us in any way. All of the sudden it was just like the war was over, and everybody just went back to being the same. It changed so fast like people being in uniform was not the same anymore at all. A date was to go out in bars and drink, and they went bowling. My sister took me along a couple of times. I thought that was normal to go out when you were fourteen to sit in a bar and drink. That was a date. I think that came about from the war.

C How would you say that was a result of the war?

M Because I think the soldiers were home for a few days, a couple of days, maybe a weekend, maybe a week and the girls were out in the bars playing the juke boxes and hanging out together because there were not many men around to date and that was where you went to dance. Every night became a celebration. Maybe they went to bars before like for a special occasion, but if you are just home on a furlough, that is a special occasion. Bars became like a place where you habituated. I remember how common and ordinary it was to go into bars, when it was the glamorous thing to do.

C And smoke?

M Yes, smoke cigarettes. A lot of women drank along with the men. If you were like my mother and my aunt who did approve of drinking, not to worry, there were all of these floozies as they called them who were willing to drink with them in the bars after the war. Women were going freely in bars and going in alone, probably from working in the factories and things and then stopped and cashed their paychecks. They became like pseudo-men almost. I do not think that ever occurred before. Some of the things like that the war changed. I guess they learned to adjust and to adapt, did they not?

C Yes

M I do not know that they ever changed back. I think they were able to adjust much better to the Depression than the war. After the war I do not even remember feeling innocent, and I was just a young girl in school.

Now that you brought that up about the bomb. I cannot recall anyone in junior or senior high school talking about that atomic bomb. They would have been talking about that more than they would have five years before been talking about those bombardier planes and stuff. They taught us all about those. We knew all about the tanks and the different planes that were in each campaign and who flew, like Captain Eddie Rickenbocker or whatever his name was. We were taught all of these was heroes, General MacArthur.

C Heroes, yes, sure

M I never knew until a couple of years ago the name of the pilot who dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. It was Colonel somebody Tibbetts. I saw him on television. How about Dresden? We were not told what happened at Dresden.

C. No we were not

M I do not think anyone knew about Dresden until Kirk Vonagette revealed it in his books, and that was at least a decade later when that book came out. He made the public aware that we fire bombed Dresden and many other cities like that.

C Do you think there was a conscientious effort to promote a certain image to think that you could conform to the image of a mass slaughter? Because of the bomb it was suppressed.

M. Looking back and feeling as I do today, which is quite jaded, yes. I would not have thought it then. But now it seems as logical that they did not want our image tarnished, the government. Of course, I think our government image got tarnished the worse, never to be saved again, by Vietnam and Watergate. Those two things changed the face of how Americans viewed their government. They were very

patriotic and naive before that, I think even in the Korean War. They did not talk much about the atomic bomb in the Korean War either. That was five years later when that started. I have no conscious memory of that being discussed. I told you all of the things that I remember when I was ten, eleven, twelve, and then all of the sudden I do not remember that from twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen and seventeen.

C. Something is wrong.

M Yes. This was a deliberate denial. These things were done. There was a great scheme in realizing that maybe all along, everything is connected and there is always some great plot. In the war, all these naive people dancing with gardenias in their hair and those soldiers were all being tricked. I think about that an awful lot, that loss of innocence, like I said, and them being there. They were so eager to go and fight for America. I think it is worse here now. I remember feeling that everybody was in it together, and I was a toddler, and I remember that. You had comrades, but that was the feeling, if I were to describe it. It was a camaraderie. It is lacking today, almost everywhere, I think.

C No, there is closeness, especially as a united closeness. There are pockets of people.

M It was called the war effort, and it was the war effort. In every child, as I said, from the gum wrapping, the string saving, the tin can smashing, going about fudge activities up to the men at the front, you were all seemingly connected. That was what it was, it was a sense of connection to the whole.

To this day I never recall feeling like I did during World War II. I am glad. I do not want to be naive ever again. It was not because I was a child. My mother and father were the same way. They were holding their hands on their hearts and pledging the flag, and my dad, who is going to be eighty-four, still acts the same way. You cannot say anything wrong about America, which I find frightening as much as I do in a fascist country. There is just a lack of interest. How many people do you meet that even care about anything that is going on? They talk about cars and apartment rent and who got laid off at General Motors and who is starting up. There is never anything about the state or the world, in general, or the wars of the troubles that the planet is suffering. I think it started dying in World War II. Vietnam just capped it off. That is all I have to say for now.

End of Interview