

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Project

Personal Experience

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ELIZABETH CLARK

'Interviewed

by

David Powell

on

November 5, 1986

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: ELIZABETH CLARK
INTERVIEWER: David Powell
SUBJECT: blackouts, rationing, school life
DATE: November 5, 1986

P: This is an interview with Elizabeth Cole Clark for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on World War II on the Homefront, by David Powell, at 564 Adelaide NE, on November 5, 1986, at 5:50 p.m.

About what was your age when World War II started?

C: I was about eighth grade.

P: Where did you go to school?

C: I went to Cortland.

P: A rural school at that time?

C: Yes, we had first grade through twelfth in the same building.

P: Could you tell us a little bit like what it would be like during a typical day at school?

C: I remember we had eight periods. This is between eighth grade and ninth grade, and then all through the war was pretty much going through high school. We were allowed to take every single subject that we wanted to. We could take home economics or shop or physics or chemistry or bookkeeping or shorthand, typing. We were never told that we couldn't take anything. They never actually steered us into one class. They wanted us to have a complete education so we got all facets of it. When the war started . . . We had a good basketball

team. Really quite an outstanding basketball team and as soon as the war started all sports were stopped. All sports! All activities were stopped in school. We did have the senior play and the junior play and that was about it. We had intramural sports but other than that anything that took gasoline we stopped.

P: Did any of the young guys did they do any training around school, or did they have anything around school that would train them for the Army or Navy or anything?

C: No, especially our seniors. As soon as they turned eighteen they were gone. If it was after January they were considered through school, they had completed their senior year and the second they were eighteen, why. . . If it was January they were gone, they left, they didn't stop to graduate. What was very, very sad in many of them was the fact that when graduation came the parents had to come up and get the diplomas. It was sad not to have those boys there because the parents were worried about them, and you knew that they were in the South Pacific, or that they were in Europe. It was difficult.

P: Was there any way of knowing where they would be?

C: You had a pretty good idea from their APO number. If you sent letters to San Francisco you knew it was the South Pacific. If it was New York for their APO then you knew it was Europe.

P: Was there any other way of telling? For example did they ever attempt to tell you where they would be in the mail?

C: No, because I knew where they were. There was no reason to identify exactly where they were. Of course, you weren't allowed to know exactly where they were. Most of us wrote letters to anybody we knew in the neighborhood and stuff just to keep mail going because we were asked to keep your morale up. So, everybody wrote letters. You would write maybe five a day.

P: My dad was telling me that they had blackouts, and so forth, especially in the early part of the war. Having read a lot about the war I can't see why they were necessary now, looking back. Did they have anything like that?

C: Oh, sure. There were a lot of things we did. I think it was basically to get the people to feel that hey, this is a war going on, even though it is not touching us here. As far as bombs dropping and stuff, at least we were aware of what other people were going through. I think it had a psychological effect on people and it

got you into the feeling, yes, you are part of it. If you did this you were being . . . You were doing like they were in the east coast, and the west coast, at least you knew . . . I am sure the planes couldn't have gotten that far but you just were part of it.

P: Now when they did these blackouts and so forth, who was in charge of them or how did they carry them out?

C: Well, they had the civil defense, especially in the cities. Of course, we lived out in the country on Niles-Cortland Road, which was pretty much farm country at the time. They had civilian defense people, some men and women. Some of the men stood on top of the tall buildings, like they did with the tornado bit here, they had the spotters. They would look around and if they saw a light or anything, you were simply chastised and told you shouldn't do that.

P: I know my dad said they had a big whistle or a big siren or something. Did they have anything like that?

C: Not out in Cortland, no. We were so far out that. . . And we didn't have big lights like they have now; it was just very small light. We were just told when it was happening and everybody please shut the lights out. You were just a little more cautious. People had drapes and they closed their drapes. They did not want you to see any distances. What was strange was we were used to street lights. All of sudden if you did come to town there were no street lights, just the car lights going. Then when the war was over they turned all the street lights on, it was just like fairy land with all those lights.

P: Now, during the war, were there any times when there were food shortages or anything?

C: Not really food shortages. The people that had the worst time were those that were a single person or just a man and his wife, say two people, because they didn't have enough ration stamps. If you had a slew of kids you had more ration stamps than you knew what to do with. Often times those with large families simply passed them around to others who didn't have them.

P: All right now, what all was rationed?

C: Oh gosh, there was lots of stuff that was rationed, meat. . . Of course Durig out in Howland had the greatest black market deal going. If you wanted to pay the price you could get any kind of meat from him, and butter, shortening--like Crisco or Spry or whatever they call them. Shoes were rationed, you were allowed two pair a year. That was leather, you could buy paper

shoes, and of course it was great if you didn't go through water. If you went through water they would unglue and then they literally came apart on your feet. Coffee was rationed, sugar was rationed, anything that came in a can. Now, if you did a lot of home canning they would give you . . . You would go in and ask for extra sugar stamps. They would give you those. Those however, you still, if you were lucky enough to . . . Your mother canned, you had plenty of peaches and pears and plums and things like that that made up for the cans that you didn't have. We also used to buy a beef thawed and freeze it. That is when the first frozen foods came out. The locker system had already started and my folks had a locker in Cortland, where they would have like a half a beef. So, that was not rationed however, you could do that, but it was harder on the people in town.

P: That is what I was wondering, if you bought that beef then if was part of your rationing?

C: No, no, you went to a farmer and bought the cow. Although, I think you had to maybe give up the stamps you had but yet you still had more meat. No, we had no real shortages as far as I'm concerned.

P: Okay now then, rationing was, as far as the average person, you don't believe it was really a hardship for most people. >

C: No, no! The thing was that cars, that was the thing, you couldn't get a car. We were really lucky because Dad bought a new Buick in 1940. It was 1940 I think. It was a good car and we didn't have trouble. People who hadn't purchased a car, maybe they had a 1938 car or something like that. The tires were worn out, everything was worn out, there was nothing you could do about it. You occasionally were lucky enough to get a recap or if another car was in an accident you got all the parts to it. If you had an old car . . . You could buy an old car, maybe it was seven, eight years old for the same amount that if there was a new one available. Because I remember buying a 1935 old Buick and paid \$800. If they were in production you could have had a beautiful car for \$800.

P: So, basically then the biggest problem would have been cars. What about tires and things?

C: Tires were bad, you couldn't get tires either--my dad didn't have any trouble--unless you were in a specific or needed area. He was, so he got tires. Any farmers got stuff too. Farmers had plenty of gasoline, plenty of tires, and they felt less of a shortage than city people did.

- P: My dad said that he had never had a victory garden but I have heard about them. How many people had them and what was the purpose of those?
- C: Oh, geez, the victory garden. That was again just to bring people some fresh vegetables and things like that that they may not have bothered before. The victory garden again was, I think, a psychological thing that people were doing something in the war effort to help. Yes, it is just like having a garden now for the cost. I remember seeing in a window a potted ceramic, or this clay pot with a tomato out of it and that was somebody's victory garden in the city. They felt it was something to talk about.
- P: As far as producing a lot, you don't really think they did?
- C: I think they . . . Well, they saved some money, because you couldn't get it in a can. Now, people who did have gardens, like the regular farmers, they did a tremendous amount of canning. That got them through the winter. So they didn't need to spend the money. It was more like money, than they didn't have to buy it.
- P: I talked to a teacher and she was saying that they had done a little bit about selling bonds and saving stamps, or whatever they called those, did they do any like that at your school?
- C: We could buy little stamps, once a week they would have and you brought \$.10 in. I really didn't get involved with that because my parents bought bonds. That was kind of a slow way to do it. The kids again were getting involved. It was like a savings plan really, if they brought \$.10. I think it was \$17.90 or \$18.95, I forget what exactly the price of the \$25 bond was. If they had so many then . . . It took a long time to do it or they could bring \$.10 a day, or \$.25, whatever they wanted to. Some brought a lot, some didn't.
- P: Did they do anything else at school to try to promote this war effort or help?
- C: Well, I knitted and because I was a knitter I used to get yarn from the red cross. I could make sweaters and socks. I did not knit gloves, they were just too hard. I could do pretty simple knitting. I was allowed to knit. I knitted during my classes providing I paid attention, wrote notes but I could knit without watching what I was doing. I knitted. A lot of people knitted at the movies because they needed heavy sweaters and needed scarfs. They needed gloves with the index finger so you could put your finger through it. So, they could pull the trigger of the gun. You had

khaki for the Army, and navy for the Navy, and white for the Ski Patrols.

P: Okay now, getting back to school again. You say they stopped most the intramural sports and stuff.

C: Not intramural. They had intramural but no, like, going from one school to the other at night or anything like that.

P: Did they have any other entertainment for the young people?

C: No. Our big entertainment really, what we did every weekend, we went out and collected scrap and newspapers. Of course, the newspapers they chopped up for packing. Of course, the scrap went down to the steel mill, and aluminum, and grease, and that was about it. That is what we did on Saturdays, we went around and had scrap drives. It would be in the newspaper and then people put their scrap out by their mailboxes. We would go around through the country roads collecting scrap.

P: Then, of course, that was turned in. Did you get paid any for it?

C: It seems to me the school did. I think we probably as our junior class did it for money for the prom, or something like that. The prom was a disaster, there weren't any guys left because by the time the senior prom came along all the boys had been drafted or had gone to the service. Maybe we might have two left, two or three that is all. Lots of girls and so we would go out and eat and go home.

P: I was wondering, now I know that there was one boy out in the country where I lived who had a really bad heart and before the war everybody is all, "Poor John, poor John." Then the war came along. Of course poor John was turned down because he just wasn't fit to be a soldier. Then it wasn't such, "Poor John." Did you ever run into anything like that?

C: Yes. There was one . . . Not exactly like that because this one boy was perfectly healthy. There was nothing wrong with him. When he thought he was going to be drafted he started wearing a lift in his shoe. I think some years after, maybe it was perfectly legal, but everybody thought that was kind of strange that he put it on then. They took one boy in my class who was blind in one eye. He was taken into the Army.

P: Then you really felt though that one guy probably . . .

- C: Could have been used. He could have been used. He was very intelligent. He ended up going to GMI (General Motors Institute) and doing some other things. He became a very successful car salesman in Cortland, very wealthy. He really had the edge on everybody else.
- P: All right now getting back to . . . Did most the fellows join up or were they drafted?
- C: Usually they wanted to join the Navy. A lot of them joined the Navy if they could possibly. They kept thinking towards the end, especially the ones in my class, they kept thinking towards the end that maybe the war would be over. Then the closer it got they realized it wasn't a lot of them joined the Navy or tried to get into Air Force. The big thing was to get into the Air Force because flying was more glamorous, and it built up more prestige. A lot of them went into the Army.
- P: What was the idea behind trying to get into the Navy?
- C: They figured it wasn't as dangerous as being in the Army.
- P: Oh, it wasn't as dangerous and you wouldn't be in mud I suppose. Okay now, when they did the drafting how would they decide who would be drafted.
- C: Okay, my dad was on the draft board. He was very, very careful because Dad had been in World War I. He figured that if the boy came and he appealed the draft board, that there was really a need that he needed to stay home, that his mother had no one to take care of her, or if he was a farmer and there was nobody else. My dad would investigate. If there wasn't than he would insist that they not take him. However, he felt that . . . He said there was way you could just tell if they were trying to get out really.
- P: How many people would be on the draft board then?
- C: I think there were seven. In the beginning, it seems to me, my dad was on it towards the very end. Was on it for like fifteen years after, maybe twenty-five years. He got something from the president at one time for being on for twenty-five years. He wasn't on in the beginning. In fact, he worked for the FBI in the beginning to try to watch any problems in industry. If there was any problem of sabotage.
- P: Were there any problems in that?
- C: I really don't know, because if there was it was kept very quiet. It wasn't talked about. I know the man

next door was a British fellow and he was an American citizen, born in England. He knew five types of welding, which at that was practically unheard of. He was an expert. He was with Federal Machine and Welder. That is why he was brought over here. I know that he carried his little briefcase and his things and he was escorted back and forth from Federal to Niles-Cortland Road.

P: Because they thought somebody would kidnap him?

C: Yes, yes, you had to be very careful when you had an expert. He was the one who was teaching all the different types of welding. Normally if you are one kind of a welder you are not, but there were five types. He knew all five. So it was different types of welding. That is all I knew.

P: Then he would have been valuable, they felt, to the war.

C: Yes.

P: All right now, getting back to the drafting. A lot of the guys you said joined the Navy because they thought it was easier. When could they join, was there an age limit?

C: Yes, they could join before they graduated. They could join up upon graduation or upon reaching eighteen. Then they would go. Lots of times they did that because it took them a couple months in order to get cleared or whatever it was that they needed to do ahead of time.

P: So, slow everything down a little bit and they would be here a little bit longer.

C: But once you hit eighteen you had to go. I know Bob was eighteen in March and he had to go the day after his birthday.

P: Okay now, I have talked to some of the other people and they said basically, as far as people here at home were concerned, the job outlook was really good during the war.

C: Oh, it was unbelievable.

P: Did you ever work?

C: I worked at . . . Well see, when I graduated I went to work that summer before I went to college at the Lordstown Ordnance Depot. I only worked during the summer but there were jobs everywhere. Anybody who would work

or do anything . . . My mother's little bridge club, those ladies never worked, and all of a sudden when their sons were overseas and stuff one of them started work as a welder at Federal. Another went to Packard to work on the line. One of the ladies became purchasing agent for Federal Machine and Welder. All of sudden all these ladies who had never really done anything like that felt that they would do it because they need the workers, and they felt that they were helping their sons.

P: It was also then the first chance for a lot of women to go to work.

C: Well, women just did not. You stayed home and your full-time job was being homemaker, which is a full-time job. In those days especially, but they needed workers.

P: Getting back to school now, since most of what we would consider fun things today and you didn't have television and so forth, what did you do in the evenings for entertainment, the younger people?

C: You just didn't, you really didn't because we were isolated pretty much in the country. I used to love it when I could come to town with some friends because then they could take a bus and go to the movies. There were other things for them to do. Really we didn't have anything to do. We were very, very busy though. I certainly never had any dull time because in the evening there was always homework. We had a lot of homework to do. My mother was not well, I had a lot of stuff to do around the house. On Saturday I churned butter. When my friends from town came out and realized that's what you did on the farm, they about died because they thought it was so boring.

Our whole neighborhood out there . . . It was half-way between Howland and Cortland, just a little group of houses there. It was real cute. When somebody got a pound of coffee they would invite all the neighbors in for coffee. Some of the ladies would make chocolate cake or something. They used maple syrup or something else because maple syrup was a sweetening and it wasn't rationed. They were always looking around for new recipes. A lot of stuff to do. They played a lot of cards and, of course, Monopoly was in. We played Monopoly and Ping-Pong, that was about it. Everybody had to get home before dark, and that was about it. There really wasn't much in entertainment.

P: Did you go to school on the school bus?

C: Yes. See, it used to be the school bus would come

around and pick you up if there were games or stuff like that, basketball games. Then they stopped that. If for the school play, if you wanted to rehearse for the play or something like that, then a parent had to drive. Of course, if you had what they call an A card, that meant you had five gallons of gas a week. Those cars really used the gas in those days. Those great big things like six miles to a gallon or something. So, you couldn't go very far.

You were very, very cautious. If you went someplace you were sure your car was loaded. My mother wouldn't dream of going to town unless she called the neighbors to see if anybody else wanted to go. So that they really got their use. That is when the grocery stores really . . . Some of them started opening on Sunday too, a little bit. Just a few here and there because if you came into Warren to go to church you would do your grocery shopping, or what have you, or you didn't get to church. I was an Episcopalian and there was one Episcopal church and if you came on Saturday to shop, you rarely got to church because you couldn't afford the gas.

P: By the way could you buy gas anywhere for a little extra?

C: Someplaces I heard you could. Brubakers in Cortland had a gas station there and we bought our gasoline from them. Anybody who had any extra ration stamps would give them to Mrs. Brubaker and then when the boys came home on leave she had extra stamps to turn in and she would give them gasoline. So, that the kids when they came home on leave would be able to get around and do a few things. She was very nice about it. We never asked her, never asked her. People just didn't . . . Well, I'm sure a lot of people did, but people we knew just didn't do that.

P: All right now, you said that you worked, what, Saturdays from school?

C: We picked up scrap, that is what the kids did. Somebody would lend us a truck or something like that. A farmer, of course, had all kinds of gasoline for his truck. Then we would get a truck and we would drive almost to Mecca, down around that way, and part way to Fowler, and go around Bazetta. Of course I could drive a truck. So, the guys that would go would get in the back end of the truck and just do what we could do. Pick up newspapers too.

P: The people that were working, you said anybody that could work they would hire them. Did you get paid overtime?

C: Oh yes, and they used to do double shifts. Sometimes people would work sixteen hours, go home, and go to bed, and get back up and work sixteen more. It was awfully hard on them, seven days a week, it was just steady. Wages were frozen and rent was frozen and a lot of stuff like that you couldn't raise. Wages were not allowed to be raised. If you had a house that was rented for \$20, I don't care what the person made, if it was worth a lot more and you had people wanting, you couldn't rent it for any more. They had the Rent Board and they were not allowed to do that.

P: What did the people do with all this extra money they earned?

C: Bought bonds, I'm sure they invested it. Of course a lot of them were paying off their debts left over from the . . . You know we went right from the Depression right into that war. There wasn't even a breath practically between one and the other. A lot of them had lost their homes in the Depression and some of them really went to work and started saving some money. Eventually some of them built cellars, if you could get cement block. They built live in cellars.

P: So, it was kind of a chance to catch up from the Depression?

C: It was, it really was. I don't know anybody that got rich on it except for one fellow. He was a purchasing agent for one big company here. He built a home during this time. Of course, you saw all the steel girders going out there for his house. That is at the corner of Route 305 and Route 46, and you knew full well that those steel girders were coming from the company that worked for him. Because nobody could buy steel, this was impossible. My dad was in the heating and air conditioning business and, believe me, all he did was patchwork stuff, to keep things together until the war was over.

P: You mean they didn't even have any furnaces and things like that?

C: No. Only if it was an absolute, positive, such a serious thing that the people would have no heat and freeze and he had to go down . . . They would have to go down and apply and tell them the condition. He would have to write a thing as to how bad the furnace was. There was only so much that they had to put in.

P: Wouldn't this be pretty hard on his business then?

C: Terrible, it was terrible. So the men that he had, he told to go ahead and they went to work for the mills

and stuff, plants. He couldn't keep going. He had a bad time, he came out of the Depression and right into the war and had a really rough time. As I say he just patched things up just like a mechanic, he was constantly patching things up. No, he had a rough time.

P: Then a lot of people came out better but in your dad's case he didn't come out as wonderful.

C: No, no. Those who had big plants or something, and had big overtime and stuff, they did pretty well. He had a business that had started in 1914 and he didn't want to lose it. So he really kind of kept things going just to keep his business. He knew the war would be over someday if he could just hang in there.

P: Getting back to his duties on Draft Board, did he have to put a certain number of hours in?

C: Oh, he worked . . . He was very conscientious. He was extremely conscientious. He would think things over. His dad had died when he was very young and he realized how his mother had struggled with all the children. So, he had a real concern for a widow, or a mother who was being left alone, or how hard they had to work. He was very, very careful about who they took and if it was a son . . . If a son could prove--if he wanted to go even--if the son could prove that he could support his mother and there were other monies coming in, he said they would take him. They could prove it. If he was the sole support and there was nothing coming in then they would say stay home.

P: I know, like in the Vietnam War, if some of the people didn't want their children to go they sent them to college and so forth. Would that have worked during the Second World War?

C: No, no, your colleges . . . Believe me I was in college with all girls. The only thing you had in college were your B-6 and your B-12 and that was the Navy officers and the air officers, potential pilots; B-6 and B-12. I think the Army was in certain schools and stuff. They were in there for so many months training and they were gone. In fact, I was at Youngstown University and there were about four boys. I remember one was a . . . His dad was superintendent of schools. He had colitis and they couldn't take him. Eventually he died of cancer of the colon about . . . He became a doctor and died of a combination of cancer of the colon and polio years later, but he could not go. You had to be pretty well fit physically. Another boy had a bad heart and he could hardly make the stairs at Youngstown, the old Jones Hall.

P: So, then going to college wasn't a way out?

C: It was . . . No, no. Teaching school was not a way out either.

P: They figured they could get schoolteachers?

C: Yes. I would say superintendents and principals might, but usually they left . . . Usually they volunteered or enlisted on their own because they could be commissioned because of their education. Kind of a pretty glamorous existence, a lot more money you made than teaching school.

P: Okay now, getting back then to the school thing. The schools then, quite truthfully, encouraged the war efforts when they could. You picked up scraps and so forth, and they cut down on things like sports because of the gasoline involved and so on. Now, did they ever have the kids do anything else to help? I remember reading one time about they tried to . . . Milkweed or something they were saving. I was wondering if . . .

C: We didn't get into that, no. I know it was done but we didn't, not our school.

P: The Warren area then, of course, had a lot of plants working overtime and so on. I know at this time a lot of people moved into Warren from different areas because the amount of work. Where did they all live?

C: Oh gee, first of all they weren't welcomed. The old timers of Warren were not happy, the same thing happened in World War I and they brought a lot of people up from West Virginia, and Kentucky. A lot of them came to the Leavittsburg area because there was . . . I can't remember the steel mill out there. Well, anyway they had a bunch of those. They also just crammed in and then they built the Windham housing project, which was this mass production. They also had West Lawn and they built all those houses in West Lawn. That mess over there in the southwest side of Warren right now. Of course, that was temporary housing to be torn down after the war was over because it was really just put up like a cracker box. That was how they housed those people, workers. Again though, the old timers in Warren did not welcome this and Warren, as a result, always has that reputation of being a very cold, unfriendly place. Because a lot of people were shipped in here and all of a sudden beautiful areas were taken over.

Leavittsburg was one of the most beautiful places around, if you notice the gorgeous homes going out West Market Street on the right hand side. Beautiful,

beautiful mansions were out there. Liberty Steel, that was the name of the steel mill. Liberty Steel came in across the street there and put up the whole row. Smack those row houses, or like the old factory houses, and just destroyed the whole area. Which was beautiful with the river and the grounds around there. It destroyed Leavittsburg.

P: Yes, I have seen a few of those nice, old houses out there.

C: Gorgeous homes, gorgeous homes!

P: I never really thought of Leavittsburg as being a nice place because from the time I remembered it was all the little homes.

C: Now, that is where the wealthy people went. The money went that way. Not towards Howland, that was yuck. Because people wanted that river, the beautiful river and they could row, you know have canoe rides down the river. My grandparents had a home there and it faced the river like it did in the Virginia area, and you went down to the river. It was beautiful, it was a brick home set way back. It was beautiful, but it just turned in to junk. It was just horrible. That is a result of the steel mills.

P: See, I never knew that. So then when the people came in, of course, I imagine there was not only hard feelings but I imagine there was a lot of prejudice against where they were from.

C: Oh, absolutely! Warren was a very wealthy town. One time Warren, historically Warren was one of the most wealthy towns in the entire United States, per capita the highest amount of money for a single town. Then when these people came in they brought in a culture that they did not appreciate. People were well educated, and very refined, and all this and this riff raff comes in and it just practically destroyed the town. I don't think they ever really blended as well as they could have.

P: I know when I was growing up there was always a feeling about northeast and west side of town. This must have been when it started.

C: Warren was never prejudiced against black people. It was the riff raff because they had some very fine, fine black people that really added to the town. They were more upset about what we called hillbillies, the hill people that came in just to get jobs.

P: Of course, they came in for the steel mills. What else

did they do here in Warren besides make steel during the war? Do you know?

C: Oh yes, Federal made tanks. I forget what Thomas Steel made. Jeeps, no that was . . . I shouldn't say because I really don't know.

P: Now out at Lordstown they have that big complex, what did they do out there?

C: That was simply an ordnance place. I remember typing on the first electric typewriter that would be as big as a suitcase. The heat coming off it would almost knock you over, it was just like sitting in front of a fireplace the heat was so great. They would come in and make orders of what they needed. Whatever you got, what they called a "red project", you knew there was going to be a battle somewhere. You figure where the APO was and you knew that something was going on when these "red projects" came through. Because the orders of what they were ordering out of the ordnance department here, you knew something was going on someplace.

P: All right now, at Lordstown then they didn't actually make shells or anything like that?

C: No, no, that was an ordnance depot.

P: Okay now where did the shells come from?

C: Ravenna Arsenal had all the . . . Putting together the shells were out at Ravenna.

P: Oh, then Lordstown was just kind of the shipping point.

C: Yes.

P: See, now I never knew that.

C: See it was an ordnance depot, that is where all the stuff came that you shipped out.

P: I didn't realize that. I knew they made shells out of Ravenna but I didn't really realize. I just thought they shipped them from Ravenna always.

C: No, I think they shipped them from anyplace they could. That was the ordnance depot. That's what it's called, Lordstown Ordnance Depot. You know I never really thought of that.

P: I just never really thought what they did out there. I knew they made shells out of Ravenna but I didn't realize . . . I just figured they would put it on a train, or something, and it went. Getting back now,

you say your dad checked to see if there was any sabotage or anything.

I remember once when I was a little kid and lived out in Graceville and I don't remember it very well. I only remember one thing, a train tipped over and wrecked. I remember it rained and they had powdered milk. I was a farm boy and that really amazed me that you had this white powder and when water hit it went into milk. Anyway that is what impressed me, it didn't come out of a cow. Were there things like that that looked like they could have been sabotage, or didn't they feel it was?

C: Well, they really watched and if there was any little accident or anything they kind of were very careful. I don't think we had the problems around here because we were far removed from the center of the German population. Which Cleveland . . . Now, Cleveland, they really had a situation in Cleveland. They had to be very, very careful then because they had the German Bund in Cleveland. I heard many, many stories about that. Those people were really under surveillance.

One thing that we did not have, other things that we did not have during the time of this war, was anything wool. You got nothing wool. No wool coats. It was very rare because all wool was taken for the service. You couldn't buy sheets. I remember standing in line. I heard that they had some sheets so I went downtown Youngstown, in what was then McKelvey's, and standing in line because I heard they had sheets. Of course nylon stockings, we went from nylon stockings to painting our legs because nobody could afford silk stockings. The nylon was all taken for the parachutes. Of course, I didn't smoke but I stood in line for cigarettes for those people who did smoke. Chocolate was a real treat, candy bars. Gee! So those things we were very short of. All the wool was taken and you don't realize that when the wool is gone . . . We didn't have all the polyesters you had. You wore old coats because they were wool and you took old bits of wool that were falling apart and you put cloth in front of them then tied and made quilts, warm quilts.

P: I remember my dad always smoked either Camels or Lucky's and I can't remember which is which. He smoked one for a long time and then the other and I can't remember . . . I remember during the war he had a little box that you put tobacco in and paper. You would lick the paper and it would make a cigarette because I used to get to make cigarettes for him. Realizing now, when you said that it was hard to get cigarettes and my dad was a heavy smoker, I guess that is what was happening.

- C: Oh, I had friends who were heavy smokers. So, I stood in line for them because I would make a deal. I am a candyholic. . . . Get chocolate bars, Hershey bars. Oh, that was the greatest to get a Hershey bar. That was just great. Although we had stuff, where you could make candy, you could make Take maple syrup and boil it, you know, and stir it and make maple sugar candy. You know we lived, believe me it was no sacrifice. They can't say people really sacrificed because we didn't sacrifice much at all.
- P: So there wasn't really what you would call a real shortage then.
- C: We did have relatives in England and we would hear from them. They were literally starving to death.
- P: Of course, I suppose it would be impossible to send them anything.
- C: Well, occasionally we tried to send stuff. Still the stuff that they needed was the stuff that we had that was rationed, like the tin cans of ham or anything, any kind of food. It was costly because all that stuff weighs a great deal. They really had it bad. They almost starved to death.
- P: I had a couple people tell me that when they had servicemen in the service if they would write things they weren't supposed to they would censor the mail. Did you ever have any instances where you knew about that?
- C: Oh yes, this one lady who was a buyer for Federal, her husband joined the Seabees. He was really too old, he was in his early forties and he joined the Seabees. He went South Pacific but they had come up with a code before he left and she knew exactly where he was every time but she never told anybody. Really I was too young to know what the place was. I mean I didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was when it was bombed. I said, "Where is that place?" So as far as any of the islands, I didn't know. They did have a code and he would write his letter in such a way that she would be able to know exactly where he was. She never told anybody.
- P: If someone would be hurt or killed how I realize they probably would notify the parents but how. Would they put it in the paper?
- C: Okay, first of all, if they were killed, you know, somebody came to your door with the telegram. Then every night you would go to the mailbox to get the paper. Usually it was on the front page, it would say, "killed" and "wounded", "missing in action" and you

were always very, very grateful when you went down through it and there was no one that you knew.

I remember when Bill Kerr was killed. Of course, the Kerr family was very, very well known. They owned Ohio Corrugating. That is Jack Kerr's brother. There were only the . . . There was Jack and Bill and Judy. Bill was a very handsome young man and he was killed.

Then my mother and dad's very dear friends had an only child, his name was Wilbur Cordell and he was a gunner. He was shot down over Germany. Then their other friend, who we used to spend a vacation with, his name was John Conkle. They had a florist shop on the west side. John was in a foxhole in the South Pacific. This was in the very early part of the war. He realized the Japanese were overrunning and they were going to all be killed, and so he held them off until his buddies and troop could get away with a machine gun. He eventually was shot. Then they renamed Lordstown Ordnance Depot for Conkle. That's who it was named for. He was quite a hero.

Our neighbor boy was running across a railroad track in Germany and it blew up. We had several people who were injured and killed. Les Jones from Howland was a prisoner of war. He was . . . I don't know if he was the pilot or a bombardier or what he was, but his plane went down over Germany and he was a prisoner for the rest of the war.

P: Now, I know my mother used to have banners, because I had three brothers.

C: Every window . . . Okay if you had somebody, as many as you had, you had a star on the window for each one. It was a blue star . . . Two, three, or four that meant you had two, three, or four in the service. If it was gold that meant somebody was dead. Then you had the gold star mother's club started in kind of a moral support for these people who lost their children.

P: Now around, like Labor Day parades and Memorial Day parades would they have been bigger then?

C: Well, people were extremely patriotic at this point. Of course, we were coming through a period of time of great patriotism. It was very, very different because even though we had gone through the war we felt that . . . I'm sorry, the Depression, that when we were attacked by the Japanese that this was an insult against our country, naturally. We reacted in a very patriotic manner. We just did.

P: Now when you went to the theater, what type of

movies . . .

C: Okay, they all were war movies. Constantly war movies, and of course Jimmy Stewart, and John Wayne, Clark Gable, and all of them. They were war movies. Then you have got the news pictures and that was war news. Everything you did, all the music that you heard. . . . Beethoven's Fifth became very popular because of it's dot, dot, dot, dash, which meant V, which became the victory symbol, and of course it was played all the time. Plus a lot of music that came out. Lots, and lots of music out of World War II. It kind of spurred people on and the movies always ended with happy endings. Yes, there were people that were killed but it went ahead and gave people a shot in the arm. You always cried your eyes out at the end because it was always sad, but at least it was a good part in the end. That is how they kept things before. You had to go into total war. You can't win a war unless it is a total war and that is one of the hardest things to get going. You have to use all these things. It has to be a total war where every single thing that happens in the country happens for the war effort. You have to psych the people up just like anything else. It is just like winning a ball game, you got to psych the people up.

P: Now, I know at the first part of the war we weren't doing so great. How did they portray that?

C: Oh, terrible! It was terrible. It was very, very depressing. I can remember my father and mother discussing it and that is why I was so aware of what was going on, because we were not doing well at all. We knew eventually we would. The only thing that won that war was man power. It was industry. Industries of the United States won that war, not the guys in the field. Really it was the industry. Our production was so phenomenal that it just amazed the entire world; the production the United States came up with.

A lot of things came out of it, your powdered foods. So much came out of the war, a lot of bad, but a lot of good came out of that too; a lot of inventions and discoveries and sulphamycin, penicillin. It was never heard of until the war. All your miracle drugs and a lot of the stuff we eat today; powdered milk, powdered eggs. All this stuff that we are just taking for granted, all our quick foods. I think of the old C-rations and K-rations and stuff and how Nescafe was the very first of the instant coffees, and a lot of that stuff.

P: I know that in my own case I had never had pizza until after about 1948 or 1949, and I don't know if that was because it had gotten popular and they brought it back.

That was the first time I had pizza and it was brand new food. I know that it was brought back.

C: I think I was I freshman in college first time I had it. I burned my mouth and I didn't like it for a long time.

P: A lot of our inventions in . . . Now, you said there was a lot of music that came out of the Second World War. What type of music?

C: Patriotic. One of the ones I remember was "Dear Mom," and it was a song as the boy was writing home to his mom. Of course, all of the Air Force songs. We always had the "Caisson" song and the "Anchor's Away" and the "Marines Hymn", but now you have an Air Force. The Air Force song came and a lot of real sentimental songs, like "Together," and "Always," "I'll See You," or "I'll Be Seeing You." "White Christmas," that was a real tear jerker at the time, even though it had been before. It became really a real important song during that time. So many of them . . . A lot of the music came out of that time. Of course, "God Bless America," with Kate Smith and Irving Berlin and all his music. It was all very patriotic. It still is, it is just as good today. I remember very well every single day you pledged the flags and had a prayer, Lord's Prayer at school. Prayed for the safety of the people in the service and then a swift completion of the war.

P: All right now, you said something about the OPA or rent control and I know we had so many people moving in here. How could you encourage people to put up places for people if you couldn't make much money?

C: You couldn't. People didn't put up, the government put up all the housing. There was no building going on at all. No buildings at all.

P: Then it wasn't private building.

C: No, no, it was government. At the end of the war then they sold off those houses in units. No, there was no construction at all.

P: I couldn't see how you could get enough homes for people if you were discouraging it.

C: No, it was all government, every single thing. There was no building, there was no materials to build anything. I mean you think about oak flooring, that went for crates. There was just nothing. Any wiring went for wiring of the jeeps or automobiles or anything like that. All that construction went to all government . . . Believe it or not in those places they

have oak flooring but the walls are like paper. If you put several layers of cardboard that is what those walls are like. Then also, people who had large homes were encouraged if they would make them into duplexes. That is like John's house. See, that is how his house is. If you go in and look at materials you are just shocked because that is what the materials were and they were encouraged. That was all that was available. They could make that into a huge apartment.

P: So then basically they kind of . . . That is why we got so much of what I would like to think of as substandard housing.

C: Oh yes, because see that was only guaranteed to people. . . In fact, that was promised that would be torn down as soon as the war was over. It is still there.

P: I know, like up in Windham the housing projects there are just trash.

C: It was absolutely terrible. It was a lot like that. . . Windham housing project was just about the same as that movie The Dollmaker that Jane Fonda was in. When they went to Detroit to work in the factories in Detroit. That is just about the way Windham was. Same type of housing, everything was the same. Potbellied stove in the middle of . . . Can you believe I left a home with a oil furnace and everything to move into an apartment with a potbellied stove? I didn't even know how to build a fire.

P: I remember that, in going back to my own childhood in Warren, we had a coal furnace. I can remember taking the ashes up and stuff. I suppose during the war they didn't do any conversion to natural gas. They must have done it some time but I don't know when.

C: Pretty much came after because even though gas was available during the Depression people could not afford to put them in. There was not much building at all during that time. The big building boom, of course, came after the war and the big changes.

P: Let's see if we haven't missed something then; rent control, draft board, we talked about that.

C: You want me to tell you about going to Mount Union? It was funny.

P: Okay.

C: Okay, my college experience really got to be funny because I was kind of a . . . You know just a typical

seventeen, eighteen, nineteen year old was going to have a good time in college. My first class, my first year in college, the veterans were being let out who were like in their late thirties, and had like forty-six missions over Germany. They were returned home. Most of them were married and had children and they were returned home. Now the government was giving them the opportunity to go to college. Now all of a sudden here I am in a class of all older man. I'm eighteen and they are in their late thirties. Let me tell you the competition was unbelievable. I was still playing around with sororities, wondering who I'm going to date that night, or the next weekend or something. Those guys are dead serious. There was no fun, no games, this was strictly business, and you didn't goof off, and you didn't come late to class, and you didn't wait until the professor was ten minutes late and you could run out like crazy. They stayed and it better be good.

P: A little stiffer competition, huh?

C: A whole stiffer competition and the experiences those men had and could write about. I felt like I was . . . That they were on their doctoral level and I was in first grade. That was the difference. You sure had to grow up mighty fast. Then they built the Quonset huts at Mount Union. They built Quonset huts for the veterans to live in. Like just a whole slew of these little, half-moon shaped buildings, field buildings for them to live in.

The food was still bad as far as institutional food. When I went to college I had to take my coupon book because you couldn't get food unless you did that . . . Of course that is when my folks really missed the sugar and the stuff. The college sure got it and used a lot of it. I swear I sold it. With the veterans coming back things really changed. They demanded good classes and if a professor wasn't giving them what they wanted, they went to the Board of Regents, or whoever was there, and complained. That was the end of that professor, he had better jolly well give them what they thought they needed.

P: Shape up, huh?

C: Yes, they shaped up or shipped out. That was just about the attitude those men had and boy were they competitive. Those older ones . . . I only stayed in college two years and then quit and got married. The competition was really something because these weren't just the young fellows coming back. These were those older guys who were dead serious and had a future and wanted to make up for the years that they were gone.

P: Getting back to the Homefront then, how long did it take us to go from being at war production back to civilian?

C: About a year and a half. As soon as the war was over . . . Really I was in Youngstown when Germany gave up. I was in Mount Union when the Japanese gave up, surrendered. Of course we thought, you know we were so young and naive, we thought that instantly everybody would be back. Well, we never really thought too much about that the Army of Occupation was going to go on. I remember my father wanted a car and he signed up at Clyde Cole. If he wanted a car it was \$500 under the table to even get your name on the list.

P: Oh!

C: Yes, all of them did it. That's why they had some beautiful homes. If you wanted a car it was \$500, and then the car was maybe only \$1200.

P: Quite a hefty under the table.

C: It was a very hefty under the table. The first car I got was 1946, I think, and he was one of the top men on the list to get one. Then Ford came along and, of course, the demand was so great. A lot of these guys coming back had saved their money and now the first thing they wanted was a car.

I remember it was in 1947 when they started making mixers, and toasters, and stuff like that, because you couldn't buy anything like that. I remember working at Ohio Edison and I bought a toaster. We had a whole batch of toasters and the first one . . . Of course everyone that worked there tore down and bought a toaster. I bought one and gave it to a friend for a wedding gift, but that was the first toaster. I hate to tell you but I still have it, and that's it right there. That was 1947 and it works great. It just happens that she got another one so she gave that back and I gave her something else. I kept the toaster and it still works like a ding dong.

P: So, things like that took awhile to get then?

C: Yes.

P: Then I know, of course--by then I was getting a little older--I knew eventually they got television somewhere around there.

C: Television came in while . . .

P: 1950 I thought, but I could be off a year or two.

- C: I'll tell you, New Year's Eve 1948. Richard's, that's where his folks who live on Fairway Drive had a television set, and it was a giant, big box. It was only about ten inches high and it had to be two feet across and about two feet deep. Then they had this giant magnifying glass on the front of it. It magnified this picture that was a little bigger than a postcard, and this big, thick magnifying glass. Then you had so many things in the back that you had to adjust that it was almost not worth it. I do remember seeing Guy Lombardo New Year's Eve, and that was my first experience with television and that was 1948.
- P: Getting back to right after the war then, what did they do with all the men that were hurt?
- C: Oh, that was something else. We went to Crown Hospital and I remember going up to Crown with friends because . . . It happened to be the guy I was dating at the time, his brother-in-law had been badly injured. We went to Crown and that place was just jammed. You took cookies or anything you could possibly bake and take up for them. They got a lot of attention but they should have had a lot of attention, they needed it. That place was just jammed, the Veteran's hospital. That is about where they were around here.
- P: I know that there had to be a lot of injured men.
- C: Yes, oh yes, they tried to rehabilitate them as fast . . . George Walcheck who used to live out on Northwood lost both of his legs. He was allowed to--a loan--to build that house. It all had like . . . The entire house was built so wheelchairs could get through it and ramps. He was quite a hero and something because of what he had done that he was able to get a special kind of a loan, or got money to build the house plus his money. I think George might have been an engineer or something. He lost both of his legs but managed very well. He got around and had a very successful marriage and very nice wife, and a daughter and managed.
- P: I know from what I read they didn't have a lot of the artificial arms and legs like we have now I suppose. They had to really just start learning.
- C: They did, they did. Of course, the rehabilitation hospitals were unbelievable what some of those people . . . The dedication of the therapists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists, was something else. It had to be. One thing that our government has done I think is absolutely fantastic and that is the fact that all of these young people were given

the opportunity to have a college education for nothing and even paid to go to school. I think that is the greatest thing that ever happened. The fact that most of them, I would say, I would say easily seventy-five percent would have never have gone to college and now have this golden opportunity to certainly do something with their lives. It was phenomenal. Not only that but the GI Bill came along, that and plus the VA had the loans and stuff for them to start their homes. Stuff that they would never . . . And this will never happen again in our country. That is why we enjoy the standard of living we have because of that extra bit that the government put into it.

P: Okay. Well, let's end the interview now then.

C: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW