

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Women

Personal Experience

O. H. 1079

ROSE MARY LUCARELL

Interviewed

by

Janice Cafaro

on

October 17, 1985

ROSE MARY LUCARELL

Miss Rose Mary Lucarell is the daughter of Alex and Anna De Tomas Lucarell, and she had lived in Youngstown, Ohio for her entire life.

During World War II, Miss Lucarell worked in the Ravenna Arsenal, and one of her jobs entailed filling bullets with powder. However, shortly after she began working, she discovered that she was allergic to the gun powder, so she was transferred to the packing department, where she prepared items to be shipped overseas. Miss Lucarell held this position in the arsenal to the end of the war, when she returned to her seamstress job at Thorton's Dry Cleaners.

Miss Lucarell worked at Thorton's until 1957, and at that time, until her retirement in 1979, she worked as a seamstress for Penna's Dry Cleaners.

A member of Saint Patrick's Catholic Church, Miss Lucarell enjoys to read and to do various types of handwork.

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INTERVIEWEE: ROSE MARY LUCARELL

INTERVIEWER: Janice Cafaro

SUBJECT: World War II

DATE: October 17, 1985

C: This is an interview with Rose Mary Lucarell for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on World War II women, by Janice Cafaro, at 551 West Judson Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio, on October 17, 1985, at 6:00 p.m.

Could you tell me a little about your background? Your parents, your childhood.

L: Like what? Let's see, I was born in Indianapolis, Indiana.

C: When did you move here?

L: I moved here when I was married the first time. I was nineteen years old, just been married about three months, and moved here. So, I have lived here longer than I did in Indiana.

C: What year was that?

L: 1937.

C: What prompted you to move here?

L: At the time, there was no work in Indianapolis. My husband's brother lived here and worked at Republic Steel. So, he telegraphed his brother to come over here that he had a job for him. My husband came over here first and I followed in, I think, one month. We lived in Struthers, Ohio then we moved to Youngstown.

- C: Did you buy a house or did you rent?
- L: No, we couldn't afford to buy a house. We rented. My children came very rapidly and close together.
- C: You have two girls?
- L: No, three girls and one boy.
- C: What type of adjustments did you have to make during World War II? Your life before the bombing of Pearl Harbor and then after.
- L: Well, my husband didn't have to go into the Army. He did go and had a physical examination, but because he had four children and he worked in the mill, he was deferred. Adjustments.
- C: Things like rationing.
- L: Oh, yes. The meat and coffee rationing. Well, we weren't coffee drinkers, so I sent the coffee rations to my mother. We always had plenty of meat rations because we weren't that big of meat eaters. I remember we used to go to a butcher across the street. I think I did ask for something one day and he said, "Don't you know there is a war on!" As if we didn't know that. I think there was a sugar ration also. There was always plenty of that also.
- C: Oh, you didn't bake?
- L: Well, yes. I baked every Saturday, just like my grandmother always did. I used to do just about everything she did, on the same day.
- C: So it was one day a week then?
- L: Yes, I baked on Saturday.
- C: No sugar for your coffee or anything.
- L: No.
- C: Well, you had four children. It must have been hard.
- L: Well, yes it was. I was going to say though, my husband he was a lineman in the Republic Steel mill. We never did get around to buying a house though.

- C: How was his job changed when the war hit? Did he start making equipment for war and stuff? I am sure his work load must have increased.
- L: Yes, his work load increased. That is right, more days. I think he worked around seven days a week for a while.
- C: Did he get a pay increase too?
- L: Yes. Of course, you know the more hours, the more money. I don't remember any pay increase.
- C: Did you save your tin cans or anything?
- L: Oh, yes.
- C: What was that like? What did you have to do to save them?
- L: Well, you had to wash them out and flatten them. Then you took them to a certain place that gathered them.
- C: Did you take them every week or once a month?
- L: I think about once a month.
- C: Did you have a victory garden? I have been reading that was one of the...In order to get support up, that more of like a patriotic thing.
- L: No, we didn't because we lived on the second floor and there wasn't any yard. So, we didn't have a victory garden.
- C: Did any of your relatives go to the war?
- L: No, I had a brother, but he went to Vietnam. That wasn't the right war. My husband became thirty also and they passed a law. He became thirty and he had four children, so he didn't have to go. My brothers were older and my youngest brother was too young, so no, I didn't.
- C: Was there an attitude change after the war began? Was there more of a...What was it like? For example, when Pearl Harbor was bombed, what was your reaction and your family's reaction
- L: I remember that was quite a shock. I had people for dinner that day and we were all very shocked. Of course, some tears. I had discovered that I was pregnant just a few days before that. That was a third child.

C: You were just shocked and amazed?

L: Yes. You know, how dare they do such a thing to the United States.

C: Right. Then afterwards, what was the war effort like?

L: You mean after the war was over?

C: No, after the bombing.

L: Well, people didn't like to hear you complain about anything. The remark was always, "Don't you know there is a war on?" In other words, don't complain. Whatever it is, take it and smile.

C: Was there a rise in patriotism then, you would say?

L: Yes.

C: Did you read any magazines during the times? x

L: Oh, yes. I have always been quite a reader. I read a lot.

C: Did you notice a change in the advertisements or any of the thrust of the articles?

L: Well, toward patriotism.

C: How about toward women and working and stuff?

L: That I don't remember. I have worked so much all of my life, but at that time I wasn't working because I was having babies rather close. Of course, like Rosie the Riveter, there was quite a thing about her, about ladies working. Especially in the mill too. >

C: Did you know anyone?

L: Well, I know a girl now that I work with. Yes. Well, several of the girls that worked at Strouss', worked in the mills during the war.

C: Did they leave their jobs, or did they work both jobs?

L: Well, no. They worked there and then after the war was over, then there wasn't a demand for them, then they started at Strouss. x y.

C: That must have been quite an experience for the women?

L: Yes. I know I worked in the mill for a while myself, but that was afterwards.

C: Oh, you did?

L: That was in the 1960's though. I worked at a canteen. It was really rough.

C: What kind of job was that?

L: The canteen, where they served coffee and food.

C: Oh, okay.

L: I know I was terrified going through the mill because I had to go through this mill where cranes were swinging around over your head. The men were nice to me though, because my husband also worked in the mill and they knew him. They were very nice and polite to me, but they could get kind of raunchy sometimes. But never to me.

C: What was it like to raise your children during that time?

L: There were a lot of hand-me-downs and clothes. Although my children always looked very nice. There were a lot of hand-me-downs.

C: Did you sew.

L: Oh, yes. My mother-in-law and I used to get the children all to bed. She worked at the restaurant and when she came home from work, I would have the children all in bed. We would sit and sew until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

C: Was this because of the war or would you have done this anyway.

L: Well, it was to save.

C: People didn't go out and buy clothes or anything then, not really?

L: Not that much, no.

C: was there any baby food or anything for them? Or did they even have it back then?

L: Yes, they had baby food.

C: was that rationed too?

L: Well, I always had plenty of coupons. I didn't really have to worry about coupons.

C: Was it because your family conserved a lot or do you?

L: Well, it was meat, sugar, and coffee.

C: And that was all?

L: Yes, that was what they used to get rations for.

C: So you ate meat less? So, you just adjusted by eating vegetables and stuff?

L: Well, I am still mostly vegetarian. I don't care much for meat at all.

C: It is a healthier way to eat.

L: Yes, it is. Definitely.

C: How would you compare raising your children as opposed to, your daughters or your son raising their children? How would you compare the times?

L: I think that children nowadays are rather spoiled, because they get everything they want. More than they need really. Well, I think the children nowadays get too much. If anything ever happened to them that they would have to cut down, they would have rather a hard time. They haven't been raised that way.

C: So, you think the war, indirectly, had a positive effect?

L: I guess.

C: How were the rationing coupons distributed? Did they come in the mail?

L: I have a blank now. I can't think of how we did get them. They must have come...

C: Or did you pick them up at an office?

L: No, you picked them up somewhere, that is what it was, but where? I can't remember if it was the post office or where.



C: How often did you pick them up?

L: I think my husband must have picked them up, because I can't remember.

C: Did you notice a change in attitudes, or in your own attitude, from the beginning of the war and towards the end when it was winding down? Was there a sense of relief or were people...You could tell?

L: Yes. I remember D-Day. Goodness that was a great celebration.

C: What did you do?

L: We walked down Market Street, all the way downtown, back home again with all the other people that were cheering. Just walking and cheering and talking.

C: It wasn't a planned thing. People just started rushing downtown.

L: That's right, just started rushing downtown. Whole families walking.

C: Could you believe it was really over?

L: Oh, yes.

C: Oh, yes. What kind of effect did it have on your life?

L: Great relief and, of course hoping that there would never be another one.

C: What was a typical day like during the war years? When did you get up, what did you do, stuff like that?

L: Get up early, get the children up, dress the children. If it was during school, get the children to school. Then housework, naturally.

C: Did you and your family can or anything?

L: Not during that time. As I say, I didn't have a garden. Oh, wait a minute, yes I did too. I used to get tomatoes. I had a little red wagon. I used to take the children and the wagon and we would go down to Pyatt Street market, because we didn't have a car.

C: This was from where? Where was your apartment located?

L: It was on Helen Street, South side.

C: You would walk down there and load up?

L: Right.

C: Thank you very much for your time.

L: Surely.