

LOUISE INMAN

This is a portion of the Oral Histories of Northwest Missouri and the 1940's Program. The Nodaway County Historical Society is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council and with support of the National Endowment of the Humanities.

Today is May 20, 2009 and this interview is being conducted at the Nodaway County Historical Society Museum in Maryville, Missouri in Nodaway County. The interviewer is Joni Amthor and assisting is Margaret Kelley. We're here to interview Alice Louise Baldwin Inman and she was born March 22, 1924. She's going to tell us a little bit about life in the 1940's and about her husband who served in the war. His name is Calvin and he was a Marine and he served on the Pacific Front.

Amthor: First of all, we're going to talk to her a little bit about her background. Where and when were you born and tell us about what your parent's occupations were and if you had any brothers or sisters?

Inman: Yes, I was born near Hopkins, Missouri on a farm. And my father was a farmer. Our farm is now a 100 Year Farm. My father was born in the same house I was born in way back when. I had five sisters and two brothers. I was the youngest of all of them, so I was spoiled rotten. But I did have chores and things I had to do on the farm.

Amthor: Tell us about that. What was life like before the war started?

Inman: Well, I had a wonderful life because I was on the farm and we had plenty to eat. I didn't have nice clothes, but no one else had clothes like they have nowadays. And so, I didn't feel like I was ostracized or anything. And it was fun. I had lots of fun. My sister next to me was 3 years older, so she was enough older that I didn't have anyone to play with. But I had a friend, Dorothy Ulmer, that lived half a mile north of us and she would come down and play or I would go up there. I had a lot of chores I had to do like bring in coal and wood and cobs. I had to go out and pick up cobs from the pig pen and I always had to go after the milk cows. We always took them far north to pasture and I had to go get them in the evening and I loved doing that. I loved to get out in the country. That was my life.

Amthor: So, do you remember where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed and how old you were?

Inman: That was in '41. I was 17 and in college at Maryville State Teachers College. We didn't get information very fast in those days. So I don't remember. Probably in the evening after school.

Amthor: So you were in school when the war broke out. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Inman: Well, I was going to college in the spring of '42. I was in my 2nd year of college and I got called to the Dean's office. I thought "Oh, my goodness, what have I done?" When I got there, John Hood was there. He was the Principal at Clearmont, Missouri and he asked me if I

would quit school and finish out a term for Mrs. Browning who was teaching there at the time. I said "I'll let you know. So I talked to my mother and she said it was all right with her. So I taught school and went back to college in the summers to get more schooling. I taught school in Clearmont for 2 years and then, I was married to Calvin Inman. My husband and I went to Quantico, Virginia where he was stationed. I taught in Quantico for about 2 months. There I had 40 students in the first grade. I was the third teacher they had had since school started. I wonder how those poor children learned anything. Calvin got out of service in December and the next two years I taught in Clearmont again. The teachers in Quantico were wives of boys in service and they would teach until their husband was shipped out or moved and then they would be gone. I quit teaching there in December and we came home to Clearmont.

Amthor: So, did you know Calvin before the war started?

Inman: No.

Amthor: Did you meet him after the war started?

Inman: Yes, I met him when he came home on furlough in the spring of '44. He had just come back from overseas and Jane Twaddle introduced me to him at a ball game in Clearmont. Calvin then went to Camp Pendleton in California. That summer I went out to San Diego where my sister was living and I worked in a Defense Plant there. I was Rosy the Riveter! Calvin came down quite often to see me while I was there. Then he left to go to Iwo Jima in July. He was gone for a year and when he came back we were married.

Amthor: Did he enlist?

Inman: Yes, he and Wallace Rogers went down to St. Joe or Kansas City. I'm not sure which. Anyway, they got in a line to enlist. They thought they wanted to join the Navy, so they got in this long line with other boys that also wanted to join the Navy. Along came 2 Marines and they asked them what they were doing and they said they were going to join the Navy. The Marines said why don't you come and talk to us for a bit. The line was so long anyway so they went with the 2 Marines and in 15 minutes they had joined the Marines. So that's how they happened to be in the Marines.

Amthor: So can you tell us a little bit more about his training and possibly after that his service. Where he was stationed during the war?

Inman: Well, it's a long story that I don't know too well. He took his first training in San Diego. Then he was sent to Camp Pendleton where they were forming a Raider Battalion. Calvin sighed up for that. He had an interview and he qualified. He was selected to join the Carlson Raiders. He went to Camp Elliot for his training, which was very strenuous. He trained there at Jaques Farm. He was in the Carlson Raiders and went to Makin to fight. Do you want all the names of the places he fought?

Amthor: That would be great.

Inman: Just a minute. (looks at list) He fought on Midway, Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Tolage, Makin, and Iwo Jima. He fought on all of them.

Amthor: Did he have any specific mission that stood out that he told you about?

Inman: Makin was the main battle before Iwo Jima. He didn't talk much about Makin. What I know is what he wrote and he did write a history of the Makin Battle, but otherwise, it was just a battle – just war. He said he didn't know why he was never shot and no injuries to speak of. Somebody else lying right beside him would be hit and killed and he said he just never could figure out why that was. Of course, I told him it was because he had to come back and marry me. Iwo Jima was the worst battle he was in and it was terrible.

Amthor: So, was he there during the time that the atomic bomb went off in Japan?

Inman: No, he had already come back by then.

Amthor: Did he talk about his – did he make friends with those he was fighting with?

Inman: Oh, yes, he had some real good friends. One of his best friends, Sammy was killed on Iwo Jima. Soon after Sammy died his wife had a baby girl. We were pretty close to her. We still have Marine friends that we visited when Calvin was alive and I still hear from them at Christmas.

Amthor: So, how was the communication? Did he get letters back to you?

Inman: They were slow, but they were airmail and they were free for him. I can't remember whether I had to pay or not but all went air mail.

Amthor: Did he talk about if they had any entertainment when he was in service?

Inman: When they were on R & R, when they were back off the lines, the USO entertained them.

Amthor: Is there anyone in particular that he remembers, any special entertainer?

Inman: He never said anything about anyone.

Amthor: How was his trip back – back to the states when he was done with the service? Were there a lot of celebrations?

Inman: Oh, yes. He was put on a pedestal – different than the Vietnam War – much different.

Amthor: Could you tell us about the news reports? Do you remember listening to the radio about the progress of the war and how things were being done?

Inman: Well, at that time we didn't have many radios. So it was just what we got from the newspapers, mainly.

Amthor: How about rationing? Did you have to deal with that quite a bit?

Inman: Yes, I still have a ration book at home. Yes we had rationing. And you know we did it and we didn't think anything about it. We just expected such things. Sugar and gas were rationed and there were probably others.

Amthor: What was the hardest to get – you needed, but probably took the longer to get?

Inman: Probably gas.

Amthor: How was the travel? Did you travel much during that time?

Inman: Not in cars. I went to San Diego. I went by train and I got on the train in Hopkins, MO., if you can imagine. But I didn't like the train because it was so crowded at that time. All the service men were traveling with their wives – that would have been in '43. It was so crowded that if you left your seat, you lost it. It took 3 or 4 days get to San Diego. I was sitting with a sailor and he would go get food and then come back and then I'd go get food. People were sitting in the aisles. When I came back to Missouri I came back on the bus and it was much better.