

## LESTER AND DAISY WORKMAN

Sherman: This is a portion of the *Oral Histories of Northwest Missouri of the 1940s* program. The Nodaway County Historical Society Museum is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council and with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Today's date is April 13, [2009] and this interview is being conducted at the Nodaway County Historical Society Museum located in Maryville Missouri. The interviewer is Jessica Sherman and assisting is Kelsey Ivers. The interviewee is Lester Workman and Daisy Workman. Lester was born March 4, 1925, and Daisy was born November 15, 1929.

Sherman: Okay, we'll go ahead and start with you guys. Where and when were you born, Lester?

Lester: In Maryville, I guess.

Sherman: Where were you born?

Daisy: I was born west of Maryville, in the country, at home.

Sherman: What can you guys tell us about your family? Like what did your parents do, or did you have any brothers and sisters, and what was your younger background like?

Lester: What?

Sherman: What was your background like? What did your parents do, and did you have any brothers and sisters?

Lester: Yeah, I had two brothers. No sisters.

Sherman: Brothers? Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Daisy: Yes, I have two sisters and two brothers.

Sherman: Okay. You had a big family. And you both lived on a farm or did you both live in the country?

Daisy: We both lived in the country.

Sherman: What was your life like in the 1940s before you entered the military?

Lester: Until the military came along? Gee, I don't think I remember that date.

Daisy: She didn't ask for the date, she wanted to know what you were doing before that.

Lester: What?

Daisy: What you were doing before that; you were in school, correct?

Lester: I guess.

Sherman: In high school? Were you nervous that you would have to go into the military?

Lester: No, I don't think so. Others went ahead of me.

Sherman: Yeah. Okay, you say your brothers went in?

Lester: No.

Sherman: Just you? Did you have any family members?

Lester: Oh, I had an uncle that was – he ranked, though.

Daisy: You had your mother. His father had passed away a few years before, in a farm accident and so he just had his mother at home.

Sherman: Okay.

Daisy: He was farming at that time and going to school – finishing high school.

Sherman: Okay. Did you have any family members that participated in the war?

Daisy: No I did not.

Sherman: Okay. Did you know about any propaganda or anything in the United States that was going on in the foreign countries? Either one?

Lester: To tell you the truth they didn't reveal much information and peace. Well, may have been in peace, but it just wasn't much available; just wasn't out in public.

Sherman: How did the United States portray the war and how did they portray the Japanese?

Lester: [laugh] It's kind of a touchy deal, really, but we kept our peace pretty well.

Daisy: You were in the South Pacific at that time; that's where you served?

Lester: Yeah, well.

Daisy: Yes, in the South Pacific.

Sherman: Did you go into the Navy before or after Pearl Harbor?

Lester: After.

Sherman: How did you guys learn about it?

Lester: Well, I just thought of going into service for the country's sake.

Sherman: How did you learn about Pearl Harbor? How did you know that it had happened? Was it on the radio or the newspaper?

Lester: Well, yes, I guess it was. Actually the Japanese ship didn't get clear to Pearl Harbor.

Sherman: Do you remember learning about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Lester: I was at home I guess I was there, but not sure.

Daisy: You were there later, not at that time.

Lester: No. Not at that time, but . . .

Sherman: Okay, were you drafted or were you enlisted?

Lester: Oh, I guess I was drafted.

Sherman: Okay. Okay. What are some of your basic training camp memories?

Daisy: Tell her where you went first.

Lester: Idaho.

Daisy: No, to Idaho, to train. Your basic training.

Lester: Well, first we went to Kansas City.

Daisy: Yes, and then from there you went to

Lester: From Kansas City to Idaho to Great Lakes, clear to the East Coast – Washington, D. C., and back around the San Francisco and finally I got on a ship and went to Pearl Harbor.

Sherman: Okay. Did you have any specialized training?

Lester: Oh, yes.

Sherman: What were they?

Lester: Well, they were taking care of fires.

Daisy: In the engineer's section.

Lester: What?

Daisy: In the engineer's section down below ship.

Lester: Oh, yes. They'd go down through three closed doors, you know, we'd take pressure down; to hold pressure.

Sherman: Okay, when you were at home, did you experience much of rationing or scrap metals or metal drives, blood drives?

Daisy: I can remember the rationing and I can remember you know Mother and helping at home; we did a lot of canning and I remember one time they had a program out to make cheese and of course we had some milk cows and she would save the milk and get prepared with the cheese and the first batch of cheese she made it didn't have any coloring in it, it was just white, you know, and it turned out I guess I remember my brothers and sisters didn't think that was really cheese because it wasn't yellow. So the next batch she put the coloring in it, so it was okay.

Sherman: That's funny. Makes sense. Did you have any kind of entertainment while you were like during the war or do you remember any kind of things that you guys did?

Daisy: Well, of course with the rationing we lived on a farm and we didn't do a lot of traveling. We lived four miles west of Maryville and we just came to town like once a week to get groceries and so on because of the rationing for the gasoline and my Father had a sister in St. Joseph and her husband was in the service, so she could come up home to her folks and he would save the extra stamps and give them to her so she could come up to the farm to home and to her parents.

Sherman: Oh, okay.

Daisy: She had two children, and they would come up like maybe once a month or whatever.

Sherman: So that's how you used your gas rationing?

Daisy: She used the extra stamps that we didn't need.

Sherman: Okay. Do you remember how you got any of the news of the progress of the war? Do you remember if it was in newspapers, on the radio, either from friends at school?

Daisy: Radio, basically, and from school.

Sherman: Okay. So where did you serve after – did you serve anywhere after Pearl Harbor?

Lester: Well, let's see.

Daisy: You were in after Pearl Harbor. Yes, you were in there after Pearl Harbor.

Lester: Yes, I was, wasn't I.

Daisy: Tell her some of the places that you served at in the Pacific. Tell her about your ship and what kind of ship it was.

Lester: Well, it was a heavy cruiser.

Sherman: Okay.

Lester: And

Daisy: The name of it.

Lester: Salt Lake City. And their closest call they had, about every so often we'd alter our course. We'd go zigzag. One time just as we turned a big bullet that was for us just went right by us.

Sherman: Good thing you turned!

Daisy: A torpedo wasn't it?

Lester: Yeah, of course it was but [laugh] it was close enough.

Sherman: What combat duties did you witness or participate in?

Lester: Say that again?

Sherman: What combat duties did you witness or did you see any combat duties or did you participate in any of them?

Daisy: Battles at sea. What kind of battles you had.

Lester: Oh, I don't know, we were pretty insulated in a way from regular crew of ships because we were a large carrier in the convoy.

Daisy: Carrier. The large ships were carriers; you said they went in convoy, correct?

Lester: Well, more or less. We could – we had a crew and we could land them on the ship there.

Sherman: Okay, I see. How did you form friendships in the service? Did relate with a lot of people from back in Missouri, or did you know anybody that was from back around here?

Lester: [Laugh] Only at home. I just went on board and fella over there he asked me where I was from, and I thought well, I don't know, I'll just tell him Missouri. Well, what part of Missouri? That was after I went on ship, see. He was Tony Weiderholt from over here at Clyde.

Sherman: That's funny. Small world, huh?

Lester: Yeah, small world.

Sherman: How did you stay in touch with family and everybody back home while you were gone?

Lester: Letter.

Sherman: Letter? What did you do in your leisure time when you weren't doing . . . ?

Lester: [Laughs] We didn't have much leisure time.

Daisy: Tell her about when you were at Iwo Jima seeing the flag raised there? When you were on board ship you said you saw the flag raised at Iwo Jima.

Lester: Oh, yeah.

Sherman: And did you have any entertainment while you were in the service? Like did you get movies or radio or?

Lester: Oh, we had a lot of that, but we didn't have time to observe it.

Sherman: Let's see. Okay. Now what about D-Day? How did you feel about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

Lester: That's hard to figure out in a way.

Sherman: Do you think President Truman should have ordered the bomb to be dropped?

Lester: Well, they had to stop it some way if we could. What's surprised me was the power of the little country like Japan.

Sherman: Okay. Where and what were you doing when you got the news that the war was over?

Lester: Oh, I was on the ship there.

Sherman: Do you think that you were one of the first people to know?

Lester: I don't know about that.

Sherman: One of the first groups of people to know? How did you get home?

Lester: Oh, I was four days and four nights to Kansas City.

Daisy: Where did you dock? Where did your ship come to and let you off?

Lester: Well, up to San Francisco, I guess.

Sherman: How did the people treat you when you came back home?

Lester: No complaints – glad to get home.

Sherman: Did you adjust back to the farm life and everything pretty easily?

Lester: Oh, yes. I didn't have any reason not to. Just take life as it came.

Sherman: And did you ever stay in touch along with the people that you served with?

Lester: Oh, I keep in touch with them.

Sherman: Okay.

Daisy: Tell her about your ship reunion every year they have a ship reunion; those that served the *U S S Salt Lake City* and we tried to make as many of those reunions as possible.

Sherman: They have those every year?

Daisy: Uh-huh.

Sherman: Where do they have them at?

Daisy: Well, this year it's in Texas, see last two years it's been in Oklahoma.

Sherman: Okay, and what did you notice the difference between the war today and World War II?

Lester: Today they're on more modern ship. The *Salt Lake City* was an old ship.

Sherman: How did you learn about D-Day and the dropping of the atomic bomb, back here at home?

Daisy: I was at school. They went through school telling everybody about it. We listened to the radio to all the reports then.

Sherman: Right. Okay, and then do you remember of lot of the veterans coming back home? Do you remember seeing a lot of them, or do you remember it was like big news that they made it home?

Daisy: Yes. You know in our community had special events honoring the veterans, like dinners and things such as that. When we went to Maryville there were groups of veterans to visit with.

Sherman: Were there any concerns about the economy or any spread of disease after the war? Do you guys remember any of that?

Lester: Oh, not really. I was lucky enough I didn't get blown up or something. I felt lucky to get back.

Sherman: Yes. Okay. If you could describe your most memorable moments about during World War II, what would they be?

Lester: [Laugh] Just missing the fire from Japan, really.

Sherman: Do you have any memorable moments?

Daisy: Well, probably at D-Day, after D-Day, I think I was very frightened, you know, about all the people in Japan and how they were you know killed with the bombings; all that; atomic bombs. I think probably that there were good and bad things at that time and I thought it was very heartwarming that we were still considering them to be not so much our enemy then, after that, but people needing our prayers and help.

Sherman: Well, I think that's about all that I have.