

EUGENE AND NORMA BRADFIELD

Amthor: This is a portion of the *Oral Histories of Northwest Missouri in the 1940s* program. The Nodaway County Historical Society Museum is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council, and with support of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Today's date is April 3, 2009, and this interview is being conducted at the Fairfax School, Fairfax, Missouri, in Atchison County. The interviewer is Joni Amthor and assisting is Margaret Kelley. We're here to interview Walter Eugene

Gene: You're right.

Amthor: And Norma Bradfield. Eugene was born on January 22, 1926, and I don't have Norma's birthday.

Gene: November the 20th, 1928.

Amthor: Okay. They're both here to talk about the 1940s and Gene was in the Air Force and he was a sergeant, and he's going to tell us a little bit about that, but first they're going to tell us a little bit about their backgrounds before the war and we'll talk to Gene first. Can you tell us a little bit about where and when you were born, about your parents?

Gene: Right here. Born and raised out of here northeast of town, that's mainly it. What do you do? You go to high school and participate in school. Of course there wasn't any gasoline and you didn't have – couldn't have cars. Kind of tough times, but we survived it.

Amthor: Now did you have any brothers or sisters?

Gene: Two brothers.

Amthor: Did they go into service as well?

Gene: One did, one didn't.

Amthor: What did he go into?

Gene: He still farms here out east of town.

Amthor: Which branch of service did he go into?

Gene: Oh, my older brother went into the U. S. Navy, and he was stationed in California and I enlisted in the Air Force and went all over the Pacific.

Amthor: Norma, how about your background?

Norma: I was born down at Craig, in Holt County, and we moved up to Fairfax and lived on a farm out west of town. I grew up there. I went to Irish Grove School until I – the year, my

sophomore year, and it closed high school, and I came to Fairfax then. I had one sister. That was about the limit of it.

Amthor: Now what year did you graduate from high school?

Norma: 1946.

Amthor: Okay and when did you?

Gene: '43.

Amthor: Okay, can you tell us a little bit what life was like when you were in high school? What did you do for entertainment before the war started, that type of thing?

Gene: Well, there wasn't [pause] back then there was a restaurant down town that had a dance hall and that was well filled on the weekends, and you went to Tarkio and Rock Port to the theatres, and that was about all the entertainment there was. But you didn't go, but you didn't have gasoline, you didn't have tires, you just didn't do it. But we doubled up a lot; I went two or three different couples, and on weekends, three people [couples] would get in one car and go to Tarkio or Rock Port to the theatres. It was entertaining. You got to know a lot of people.

Amthor: Now did you parents collect the feed sacks?

Gene: Yes.

Amthor: To make clothing out of?

Gene: Yes.

Amthor: Can you tell us about that?

Gene: Oh, I believe Mom if I remember right it was Purina Mills and every sack had a different design on it, and my Mother would pick them out – which ones she wanted, and then we'd bought accordingly so she could make clothes out of them, and that's the way it was done.

Amthor: Now can you explain why they had had the feed sacks instead of purchasing the clothing?

Gene: Well, stuff was so high you couldn't afford it, and money was scarce, and you just didn't have the money to buy it.

Amthor: How about- you said you were on a farm; what kind of animals did you have on the farm? What did you raise, that type of thing?

Norma: We had hogs and cattle.

Gene: Everybody had hogs, sheep, cattle – you name it, they had it.

Norma: We didn't have sheep, but chickens.

Amthor: Did you have any tractors on the farm?

Gene: One.

Norma: We didn't.

Amthor: Did you still farm with mules?

Gene: No, horses.

Norma: We had horses.

Amthor: What about the day that Pearl Harbor was bombed? Do you remember what you were doing at that point?

Norma: I don't remember what I was doing, but evidently we had the radio on because that's how I heard of it.

Gene: We were in church. Had just got home from church and had the radio on in the car and they announced that the bombing had taken place.

Amthor: So what were they saying about the war on the news or any of the propaganda about the Germans or the Japanese at that time? Do you remember what they were saying on the radio?

Gene: Anything and everything. I was in Japan and in the South Pacific and the main one over there was Tokyo Rose. She came on every day and she would tell you about what was going on and she knew more about what was going on than we did. I couldn't believe it, that they were ten thousand miles away and she knew every move that the Americans made. I don't know how that was accomplished, and later on I was in Tokyo and I got to go up to the station where she broadcasted out of and it was up on a high hill in Tokyo and she wasn't there, but she was still alive at that time. And I guess that's about it; but she would call and tell about air raids that were going on, or had gone on, and how in the world they found out about it, they did.

Amthor: Do you have anything to add to that, Norma?

Norma: No.

Amthor: Okay. Would you tell us now about – did you enlist or were you drafted?

Gene: No, I enlisted in the Air Force.

Amthor: Why did you choose the Air Force?

Gene: I wanted to go to the Air Force. [Laugh] I wanted to fly over there instead of walking.

Amthor: Can you tell us a little bit about your basic camp memories – where were you stationed?

Gene: I've got a picture of it there, and that was a group they called them flights, and there's – I don't know, 60 or 80, something like that. That was taken down in Amarillo, Texas; that's where you did all your training. Hot, dry, and miserable. Didn't have any air conditioning. There wasn't any air conditioning. It was tough. I was kind of used to it, because I'd lived on a farm, but boy, a lot of people from the city, they didn't have any idea, you know, how things went on.

Amthor: So how were the barracks, other than having no air conditioning, and the food?

Gene: I had a bed and you had a chest of drawers to keep your things in and a duffle bag and the food was pretty good. Of course you go to a mess hall and it ran all day long. You'd get up in the morning and ate breakfast, and then came back eat the noon meal, and then come back and eat the evening meal. This camp I believe it seemed like there was ten or fifteen thousand there and they had several mess halls, but each one group like this was allotted a mess hall, and at a certain time you had to be there to eat. We were down at Fort Knox; our grandson is down at Fort Knox, and we went down there a couple years ago to see him, and they let us go through their chow line, and you know it was identical to the World War II. I couldn't believe it; just seemed like you were back in time. It was real interesting.

Amthor: Did you get any special training before you left?

Gene: Oh, no.

Norma: Yes, you did.

Gene: I ran a communications outfit and we had all kinds of equipment and everything was secret and nothing was sent in the clear. We had machines that you'd set them up and they'd descramble it – called descramble it and make it legible so that you could understand it and we were in Okinawa, I believe it was, and the Japanese, they were thinking about invading Japan ,and everything, top secret is highest rating in secret stuff, and I happened to be in on that, and read those messages, and of course you had to be cleared by the FBI to be in on that, so you know, you wouldn't. . . but I've still got a rating in the Air Force on secret stuff.

Amthor: So where did you go from Texas? Was that your last stop before going overseas?

Gene: No, you'll never believe this – I was on Angel Island, out in San Francisco Bay, which is next to Alcatraz, and was there for four or five days, and we left there and went on a ship and went south of the Hawaiian Islands, went to New Caledonia, then to Brisbane, Australia, and then from there ah, it was just a bunch of moves as the war progressed north.

Amthor: Can you tell us what your service was like there in the Pacific? Did you have any special missions or combats? Did you see combat?

Gene: Oh, yeah. See about everything. I've often wondered; I'd like to go back to New Guinea; to see what the natives are like. Back then, they didn't wear any clothes, and everybody just ran around – of course it's hot down there year around, and it would get up to over a hundred degrees every day, and at night if it got down to eighty degrees, you'd freeze to death, and you slept with a wool blanket to keep warm, because there was that much difference in the air. And I've always wanted to go back down there; they had bananas, of course, they had all kinds of stuff, and you'd pay these natives to – tell them that you'd want bananas and they'd be gone and after a while here they'd come with a stack of bananas. It was something to see the natives and how they lived. While we were down there, of course the USO shows would come through. The group came in there from Borneo – a USO show. The prettiest women in the world are Balanese, or that was the saying back then, and they were. They were beauties; can't get over it. [Laugh] But they were friendly.

Amthor: Was there a lot of – did you see a lot of – what do they call that – some kind of rot – it would get on the feet.

Gene: Yeah.

Amthor: Jungle rot.

Gene: Everybody had that.

Amthor: Jungle rot.

Gene: Yeah, you couldn't get away from that.

Amthor: And malaria? Was that pretty bad when you were there?

Gene: Well, we never did have anybody get malaria, but we always took pills. Every day when you went to mess hall, there were pills there, and you'd take one out and eat it and drink it and eat it.

Amthor: Now did that change the color of some people's skin?

Gene: Yes. You'd turn yellow and that's the way you could tell if they were taking the malaria medicine and everybody did – you knew better than not to; you didn't want it. I've seen some people with malaria, and boy that's not pleasant.

Amthor: Is there a special mission or a special story that you would like to share with us about any of your experiences on those islands?

Gene: Well, I don't know. Everywhere we went, you couldn't trust the natives. They'd stab you in the back, if they had the chance and that's like over in Iraq right now; you just don't trust them. They don't think the same way we do and the Philippines are probably the worst; they are associated with the Americans, but boy, you didn't trust them one bit. They'd try to kill you; they liked to kill people, and we were in the Philippine Islands for six months and you didn't make any friends. They didn't know what friendship was. Other people might have found it different, but that was the way I found it.

Amthor: Now your position was in the communication area the whole time you were there, so you were always getting the news?

Gene: Yeah. Yeah, we had direct contact all over the world, but not like they have now, but back then we did.

Amthor: Was there any particular message that came in that really upset you or . . . ?

Gene: Well, that's so long ago; I remember a lot of them came in that you couldn't believe, because we would hear about all these battles going on out on the Pacific Ocean; of course we knew about it first, because we had the radios to keep in contact with those people and they would relay messages and you'd intercept them and type them up and send them out to your executive officer so they would know what in the world was going on. Because you know a hundred miles away you didn't know what in the world was going on over there, but they'd get news back and forth.

Amthor: Now were you every on Luzon?

Gene: Yes. All over the Pacific – every island over there I think I was on. Sometime.

Amthor: Were you on Luzon when it took like three hundred and some days to take the island?

Gene: We were there right after that. We were there right when MacArthur walked aboard on Leyte.

Amthor: Did you see MacArthur?

Gene: Not there; I did see him in Japan, but I never saw him there.

Amthor: What was he like?

Gene: Just a big general. He got anything he wanted. Maybe I shouldn't tell this, but he had his wife and family with him and they were down in New Guinea, and there was a rubber plantation down there, and he went in there and took that over, and they flew air conditioners in there and made it ultra modern just for him and his family, and he didn't live there but two or three months, and then he moved on up to the Philippines. But that's the rank of generals, what they get to do, and a lot of the GI's didn't really care for that; they didn't like him because he was overbearing; boy!

Amthor: Now you came in later in the war; what was the date that you actually came in?

Gene: April of '44.

Amthor: So were you there when they bombed Pearl Harbor?

Gene: No.

Amthor: I don't mean Pearl Harbor – I mean when they bombed Japan?

Gene: Oh, yes. We were on – our group was – we were on – let me think about this; Okinawa and we were in training to invade Japan, and we were – everyone was there; thousands and thousands, and I always appreciated old Harry Truman, he saved a lot of lives, both ours and the Japanese, even though they killed a lot of Japanese, it's just like what he said a while ago, he said, them people, it wasn't nothin' for them, to kill you or one another; it didn't matter. But I was glad to see the bomb. I got an airplane one day; the airplane that we were going to fly over to where Nagasaki and see what happened, and we got in the plane, and got up into the air, and we got our orders that we couldn't go. They didn't allow anybody to go there to take pictures or see anything or anyone. So I never got to see that; I wanted to, but I never did.

Amthor: Did you have – were you close enough that you had to worry about radiation poisoning?

Gene: No, they didn't mention it, and it wasn't mentioned or anything.

Amthor: So the Army never mentioned that you could get radiation from that?

Gene: Nope.

Amthor: How about friendships? Did you form a lot of friendships?

Gene: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Still. I've corresponded with several of the guys over the years, and sad to say, they've all died. You got to realize I'm one of the older World War II veterans that are still around.

Amthor: Did you communicate home very much?

Gene: Yeah, I probably wrote a letter – two or three letters a week.

Amthor: Now were you married before you left?

Gene: No.

Amthor: You married after you came home.

Norma: He wrote a lot of letters.

Amthor: Did he?

Gene: Didn't have anything else to do, so you wrote letters.

Amthor: Did you ever try to tell somebody where you were?

Gene: No [emphatically]. You couldn't do it. Everything was censored. You couldn't tell where you were at, what you were doing, you could just ramble on [laugh] about things.

Amthor: You couldn't – didn't create a code like some of them did.

Gene: No. Some of the guys tried, but these guys that did the censoring, they had been trained in that, and they could pick that up.

Amthor: So how long did you stay after the bomb had gone off? When did you get your papers to come home?

Gene: Well, let's see, the bomb was August – [mumbling] five months. I was in Japan for four or five months. When I got to Japan, the Japanese people were friendly as the dickens. You couldn't believe it. There we'd been fighting a war and they just killed people for the fun of it and they – I had some good friends in Japan; they'd just visit and talk with you like. . . . When we first got to Japan, we had books that told what the Japanese language was, but you didn't need them. You could throw them away – they all knew English, because they taught it in their school over there. That helped a lot.

Amthor: Seeing such atrocities such as you have seen, how did you and your fellow servicemen handle things like that?

Gene: Well, you thought it was bad, but it's just something that you had to do. We were on Okinawa, and there was dead bodies laying everywhere, because when the Marines took that, they annihilated everybody, and I don't know of anybody that lived through it. I suppose some of them did, but not only that, there were snakes.

Amthor: Yes, tell us about the snakes.

Gene: Oh, coral snakes, and I don't know if you know it or not, but they're one of the deadliest snakes in the world. Boy, you had to watch where you walked, and be careful, because they were just thick. Of course the people there lived in little shacks and little huts out in the brush and snakes'd get in there; they lived right with them; it didn't seem to bother them.

Amthor: Now when you were in the other jungles, did you see any pythons?

Gene: No. Oh, we saw a lot of animals; lot of wild hogs back then. We had – we were in New Guinea, hadn't had any fresh meat for several months, and one night a wild boar happened to

show up in camp, we ate him _____ later. Wasn't very good, but we ate him. Then we got to the Philippines and of course we still hadn't had any fresh – anything fresh to eat; well, they had restaurants and stuff there. We went in this one restaurant one night and told them we wanted meat. Well, you got to wait. Pretty soon we heard a chicken go *squawk* - they'd killed this chicken and that was our fresh meat.

Amthor: Now, I heard there were a lot of monkeys on some of those islands; did you notice any?

Gene: Naw, we weren't around where there was that – there were a few, but – I think the natives ate them a lot.

Amthor: Yeah. I think that was what was told.

Gene: They hunted them; that was their food supply. I couldn't get over how hot the tropics were. Boy, you think it gets hot here in the summer time; it isn't anything to what it's like down there.

Amthor: Now you said you stayed there a few months after the war was over. How did you actually get home?

Gene: I came home on a ship – there's a picture of it.

Norma: No, we didn't bring it.

Gene: We didn't bring it. Well, I've got a picture of it up to the house.

Amthor: Do you remember the name of it?

Gene: *Sea Serpent*. It was – used to be a cargo ship, and they'd converted it into a troop carrier.

Amthor: So how did you adjust back to civilian life after?

Gene: I was just glad to get home. [Laugh] But I didn't have any trouble, not that I knew of.

Amthor: Did you take advantage of the GI Bill?

Gene: Yes, I went to college a year; a couple of years. A year and a half, I guess it was.

Amthor: Is that where you got your training to work on electronics?

Gene: No, I got that in the Air Force gave me more of that; most of that.

Amthor: So when did you – were you dating while you were in the service? When did you get married?

Gene: I wrote her letters. [Couple both laugh]

Amthor: And did you get married right after you got back?

Gene: Yes.

Amthor: What was that date?

Gene: July 20, wasn't it?

Norma: 21st.

Gene: The 21st.

Amthor: And what year?

Gene: '46.

Amthor: So what did you do after you got back? What was your first job?

Gene: I went out and helped my brother farm until we got out on our own.

Amthor: Were you concerned about the spread of communism from the Soviet Union when you got back?

Gene: Naw.

Amthor: What about polio?

Gene: Oh, I don't know much about that, but I can remember before the war, polio was pretty thick in the summer time and you couldn't go to Kansas City because they had a lot of it down there. We used to have relations that lived in Kansas City, and when we'd go down there – maybe once a month – we didn't stay around very long, because we were scared of getting polio.

Amthor: So to go back to Communism, you didn't think there was a threat of that at all?

Gene: Didn't. Just another country and they've got their own government, and they've still got it, and sure, we don't agree with them; they don't agree with us, we don't agree with them, so? What can you do about it? You can't go over there and make them change. That's just like I told my grandson. He's over in Iraq, and I said "Well, you can't teach those people different, they're dumb compared to – you know, compared to modern ways we do things, and they're living back in the middle ages. Eric told me the last time I talked to him, he said "Grandpa, you can't believe how dumb those people are. They live there for thousands of years and they do things like they did a thousand years ago." He said, "It's hot, it's dirty." And I'm sure those natives in New Guinea are the same way. We might have changed them a little by us being there, but . . . probably not very much.

Amthor: So what do you think is the difference between the war that you fought and the war today?

Gene: Entirely different. You knew who the enemy was – like they say, you knew who the enemy was. Now we're there, those people are all the same, look the same and you can't tell one from the other; you don't know if they're – they might be friends here, and you turn your back on them, and bam! They'll shoot you. I wouldn't trust – I found out there are a lot of people in the world you don't want to trust one minute behind your back. The Philippine Islands were good people over there, and good friends, and you'd visit with them, but they'd put a knife in your back if they got a chance. If you had a little money that they wanted, and that's all it took. If you had something they wanted, they'd just as soon kill you to get it. That's just the way the other world lived. You just ought to be thankful that you live in this country where that doesn't go on.

Amthor: Well, we're going to switch over to Norma now; she's going to tell us a little bit about what she was doing on the home front, and a little bit about her rationing and things like that, so?

Norma: Well, I probably was about the age of some of you older girls when I came to Fairfax to school, and it was really rough just breaking over coming to school. You didn't have many clothes because you couldn't buy clothes you had to have rationing stamps. You couldn't buy shoes; you couldn't have pretty shoes because you had to use useful ones, because you might have to wear that pair six months or longer. I don't remember how we came about that I could get shoes to wear to the junior/senior prom; that was another thing. The boys were all gone, so we had a few and we just made the most of it and had our proms. Another thing as we spoke of was the gasoline being rationed. You could have – I think the papers say four gallons of gasoline for one stamp for one vehicle. That had to run you a certain length of time. You could only drive 35 miles an hour, and they watched that very close because you couldn't waste that gas and I didn't learn to drive until after I was married, because we didn't have a car to drive. We had a car, but we had no gas and no tires to waste. We went to town probably one time a week, and back in those days they had victory gardens. If you lived anywhere where there was room for a garden. So we actually weren't in too much trouble over canned food, and we had our own meat on the farm. I know it was quite a strain on people that lived in cities, and I know that they showed pictures of them in magazines taking these little areas around their apartment houses and plowing them up and making them a victory garden they called them.

Norma: Another thing back then, I didn't experience this, because, like I say, I was in school, and I probably didn't pay too much attention to things, but they had women go into all the factories. They shut down car factories and made tanks and airplanes and trucks for the Army and that type of thing. They shut down other factories and they made ammunition; they used oil – people would save their cooking grease after they'd cook stuff; especially like at a restaurant and they'd come around and gather that up and recycle it and make something for the bullets – I'm not really sure what it was. People helped that way. Then they had the women-the women, that was the beginning, I think, of the women working out of the home, because they all went to work in factories. They called the lady that made the airplane – she was Rosy the Riveter, and everybody was supposed to act like Rosy the Riveter and go to work in these factories and make airplanes. I don't know – some women went to the service also, but mainly they manned the

stuff here at home and some women would just take over the farms and run the farms while the husband was gone, and my Dad was too old to go to the service, so I worried about it because I thought if the war got much worse, you know, he would have to, but he never did.

Norma: I'll show you these war bonds. At our school we had little booklets, and every time we could afford a quarter, or something, we'd buy a little stamp and put it in a little book and it would add up to I think \$17.50 and then you could take it and buy – this is a war bond, and it's worth \$25 and you paid \$17.50 and you got interest on it. No, its \$18.75 is what we'd pay and in nine months it would be from the issue date it would be worth \$25.00. And Gene still has these that were purchased during the war. I have also, and so that was another way that we'd get our book full, and we'd get to go to the bank and buy a bond and we felt very proud that we were helping the fellows overseas.

Norma: I might tell you that during that time in school, they cut out girls' basketball; we had boys, they cut out girls' basketball, we did not have home ec, and I didn't take Ag, but I believe they cut that out during that time, too. In fact, we had just – we had just barely enough classes to get through; to be able to graduate. We played inter-mural volleyball and we had football and basketball was our two things. Since your parents couldn't run back and forth, and you didn't have a car to go to the ball games, we had people in town that would board us for a dollar or a dollar and a quarter a night, and they fed you your supper and your breakfast and you stayed all night with them. It was kind of nice to be able to do that, otherwise you didn't get to go. The ball games were played down here in the old gym, and it didn't seat very many, but it was enough room for us; we had that balcony where your lockers are now. We went – we got to go to Porter's Lake up at Shenandoah for our senior thing; then we also got to go to Shenandoah and get our pictures taken and that was our outing. We didn't go on any senior trips or anything like that.

Norma: These rationing stamps that I've got I got this off of the computer yesterday. It said that we didn't have nylon hose either or silk hose. They took all of that to make parachutes, and then they finally got nylon hose and then there's good news, too, the Secretary of Agriculture Anderson says we don't have to ration bread because we have plenty of wheat. Now that was very nice. The first rationed thing was sugar and they said that we could have, I believe, five pounds of sugar a piece, and then the first book, you go in and get your book. You sign up for it. They say how much sugar do you have on hand at home. Well, if you said twenty pounds, they took out two stamps out of your book. But if you had some out in a canister, you didn't have to give them the stamp for that. You got these books and you just had to sign your life away, and you didn't dare use it, use somebody else's or anything, because if you did that, this is what it looked like, they would fine you ten thousand dollars, or send you to prison, or they might do both to you, so you took very good care of your rationing books.

Norma: Book two was put out - book one was in '42 and book two was in 43. You couldn't give your stamps to anybody; however, I'm not too sure that probably people did. This is what the stamps looked like. They were just stamps and I noticed when we get back here a little further, they must have torn them out across, because you get back there a little further and they changed the rule, and you couldn't tear them out across, you had to tear them off the ends. What the deal was, but if you messed up your book; they said if you left just a little bit of a stamp, that

you could tell what it was, they would still take it. Say, like you know, you tore it out and it tore half of the one, and then it got on – I don't know what time it was – but another ration book, and they decided they would make tokens, and then if you spent – if you got change back, you could have a token. That was nice, too, because you didn't waste any of it.

Norma: They rationed tires; you never bought a new tire, you bought a re-tread. You'd turn them in and they put a re-tread on it and Gene was telling me that sometimes they'd cut the tread off and put it on the inside of the tire where the hole was and then put your inner tube in there, and you used it and really got the good out of it. It also said that after a while – and I didn't ever know Mom experienced this – but you had points on cans and they figured up your stamp usage that. The biggest thing I think at our house was probably sugar because we canned a lot. You could apply and maybe get extra sugar for your canning, but you always hoped you could. We changed our way of baking; we had to use some artificial sweetener called saccharin. You put too much of it in, it was just as bitter as all get out, but they used lard instead of butter, unless you lived on the farm and had milk and cream and I have a cake and you'd boiled the raisins, put the – I believe it didn't have any eggs; you put the shortening, sugar and flour in and put these boiled raisins in and a little baking powder and that was a war cake. They did use sorghum and molasses or whatever like that, and then they made corn syrup and you could use syrup and stuff. That's about the end of it.

Norma: I know Gene came home and got out of the service when I was a senior and we were having our senior – I remember this. We were having our senior play and he got home and got to come to the play that night. And it was a long two years, but I had a lot of fun in high school, even though we couldn't do things. We didn't know any different. We couldn't – you girls can go to the store and buy five pairs of shoes, if you've got the money. Then you couldn't even go and get any, unless you had a stamp. And besides that, you know, you go to Maryville and _____ you get basketball shoes and football shoes, and we had to get very practical shoes. I don't know that I ever had – I suppose I had tennis shoes, I don't know, of some sort, because we played volleyball, but you just – we were really on a stringent type thing because you just didn't have it to do with. We went to town a lot of times with my Dad in the wagon and they asked what we did for entertainment.

Norma: My folks played cards and we'd get the wagon out and everybody'd gather and we'd all go to somebody's house in the wagon, and the kids all went too, and we played games, and played out in the yard and whatever. We had a good time. I don't know if any of you know Betty Elder or not, but we had a horse and we went horseback riding while they played cards, and you know we just did the home thing. We had bicycles, and out across from my house, then they came to my Mom's house and Dad's. We had ditches and we went down and played on those ditches and swung on those grape vines. The girls played a lot of paper dolls and I don't know, I guess that was probably about all we did. We cooked and different things like that you know that we don't do now because we're a busy going to ball games and things. Now I can't think of much of anything else other than I was glad when they dropped the atom bomb and I was sad that so many people were killed and had to be that way, but I was glad that the war was over. Thank you.

Amthor: Now I have a question about the hosiery.

Norma: Yes.

Amthor: Did you ever have to paint your legs like some of them did?

Norma: Yeah, you bought a bottle of stuff and you just rubbed it on there. I think you can still buy stuff and spray it on.

Amthor: Did you draw the line down the back of it?

Norma: Oh, no! I didn't. [Laugh] it would have come around the front. It was streaked too. But we thought we were pretty well dressed up. I guess that lasted over; I still don't like to wear socks.

Amthor: What was the music of the time?

Norma: Don't sit under the Apple Tree with Anyone else but me. *Always*, was one. They were pretty songs, and some of them were kind of catchy. White Cliffs of Dover. I don't really remember what the movies where. Didn't go very much.

Amthor: Now was it *Gone With the Wind* that came out in '39?

Norma: I think so. We'd listen to – of course they played a lot of the – like the Air Force song, and patriotic songs then, too.

Amthor: Big Band – was that during that time?

Norma: Yeah.

Amthor: Tommy Dorsey?

Norma: Yeah.

Amthor: Did you go to very many dances?

Norma: [Laugh] No. Nope, I lived out in the country and I didn't get to participate in a lot of that.

Amthor: What were the dances that were popular? Was it the swing or the jitterbug?

Norma: The Jitterbug.

Amthor: What about the radio? Did you listen to programs on the radio?

Norma: We had a battery radio and it ran on like a car battery? So you couldn't just listen to it hour on hour, and Dad always wanted to hear the news and markets at noon and the weather.

Sometimes Mom and I listened to some stories – continued things. There were several funny programs that we'd watch at night; I can't remember all of them. Was it? And some music programs. And Dad and Mom always listened to the ball games – that was a priority.

Amthor: Well, if you could give these students advice about what they are living through right now with the economy and the war and what you've experienced in the '30s and the '40s when the economy was actually worse and you participated in a war, what would you tell them that would be good advice for them to think about since you've experienced a lot more?

Norma: Well, myself, I really didn't know much more than what we lived through because there had been a Depression and we didn't have anything. And so I didn't know that you were supposed to have a lot of clothes and a lot of shoes and a car and the telephone and TV in your room and all of that so I'm sure that if it came to that for these students it would be a much bigger shock than it was to Gene and I because we just didn't have everything like that. But just hang in there, it will get better.

Amthor: Do you have any advice for them?

Gene: No. I think about kids now, though. When I went to high school and went out for basketball and of course lived in the country. We'd have practice from four to six o'clock in the evening, got out at six and I had to walk four miles home after that and do – milk cows after I got home and we'd go to ball games in the winter time and the bus – they had a school bus, and it'd run several families beyond there, different kids, whenever we went past the closest point to their house, the bus stopped and they got off and walked home. Now how many kids in this day and age would do that?

Norma: [Laugh]

Amthor: Good question.

Norma: Well, it's just because our lifestyles have changed.

Gene: Yes, it's changed so much that you can't believe it.

Amthor: We have time for one more question. If there was – either one of you – if there was one special moment in the 1940s or during the war, is there one last thing that you would like to share with them?

Gene: Just the joy of being home after you've been away. Like the song says: there's nothing like home. And you know, it – you appreciate a lot more when you can't and they won't let you go home and it's just good to be able to go back where you were at, and live. And I don't know about her, I guess it would be the same way.

Norma: Well, I was never that far away; I imagine that would be right.

Amthor: Okay. Well, thank you both for coming in and sharing with us.

Gene: Yeah. Glad to.

[applause]