LOU ANN (WAGNER) SIBURT INTERVIEW

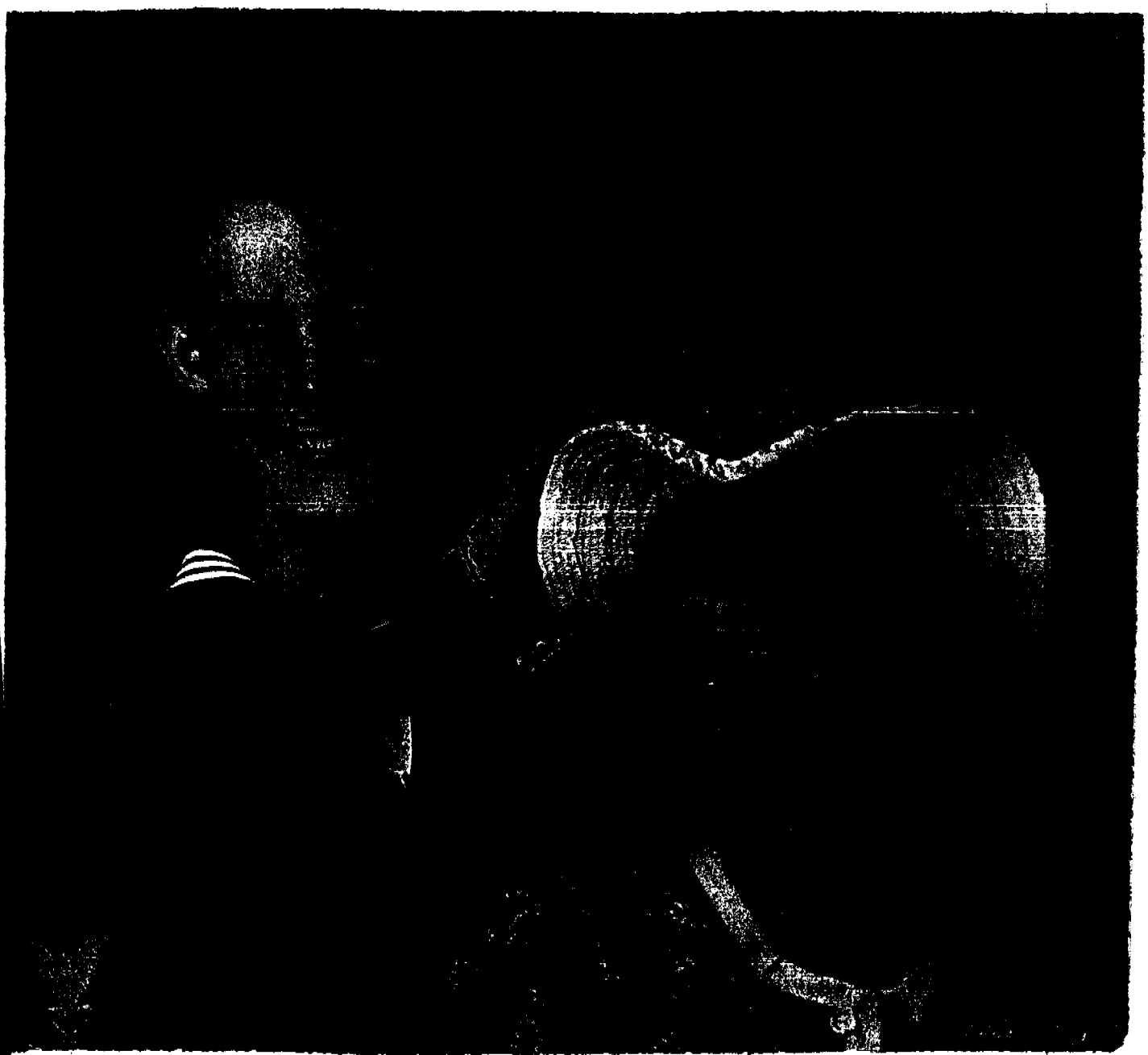
PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of tape recorded interviews conducted by Ruth Siburt for Sangamon State University Archives during the fall of 1993. Ruth Siburt transcribed the tapes as well as editing the transcript.

Lou Ann (Wagner) Siburt was born in Decatur, Illinois, on February 17, 1927. She grew up on a small rented farm near Oakley, Illinois. Mrs. Siburt's experiences as the eldest of 6 children of a devout pacifist father during the time of The Great Depression, and those of her young marriage during World War II, are an interesting recounting of the hopeful nature, and innocent spirit which seems to have marked those times.

Ruth Siburt enjoys writing and has published several picture books and articles in the area of foster care. She is enrolled in the Sangamon State University English program, as well as employeed full-time as Circulations Lead at Richland Community College's Learning Resources Center in Decatur, Illinois. She is married and the mother of one son and one foster daughter.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.



Trellain L. and Lou Ann (Wagner) Sibert

July 6, 1944

Lou Ann (Wagner) Siburt
Tape 1 Side A
November 7, 1993
1230 N. Edward Street
Decatur, Illinois
Ruth Siburt
Sangamon State University

I: Today is November 7, 1993. My name is Ruth Siburt, I am the interviewer. And I will be speaking with Lou Ann Siburt who has agreed to talk to me about her growing up years during the time of the depression, and her years as a young bride during World War II.

Okay, Lou Ann we will start out with an easy question. When were you born and who were your parents?

N: I was born February 17, 1927. My parents were Ada Lucille Moreland Wagner. My father was Alva Otis Wagner.

I: And where were you born?

N: I was born in Decatur. Decatur, Illinois.

I: And were you the oldest or youngest?

N: I was the oldest. The first child.

I: How many siblings did you end up having?

N: Six: Vivian Elaine, and Lionel Wallace, James Alva, Sharon Joan, David Gavan, and Dion Richard.

I: And did you live all of your growing up years in Decatur?

N: No, when I was 1 year old my parents moved to Oakley, Illinois. My uncles, Emory Wagner and Harvey Burkwin, owned a saw mill down on the Sangamon River. And my dad had lost his job and he needed work, and they hired him. So, he worked for a lot of years for the saw mill.

Then my folks first rented a house, and then bought 5 acres, and built a 3 room house where we lived my entire-- until I was married.

I: So, when you were 1 you moved to Oakley and. . .

N; Yes.

I: And so how many people lived in this 3 room house?

N: Nine people.

I; Altogether 9 people lived in a 3 room house?

N: We had a cave. I don't know whether you know what a cave is. But it was underground.

I: Okay. On your property you had a cave. Was it a man made cave or was it a natural cave?

N: Man made. Just a mound. It was lined, And ours was lined with brick and concrete. A lot of them, the more affluent families had theirs totally lined with concrete. And they would have shelves. Ours really was not that elaborate. But it worked. It was deep. And in fact we could take--like when we--they milk the cows, we had a cream separator. You would pour the milk in, and you would have cream come out one spout and skim milk out the other spout. The cream was what was sold, because that helped to bring in a little cash money. Because cash money,really, see--that was always our problem. There was just about always a way of having. . .we did have a roof over our head and you did have food. You just didn't have, the cash was hard. They would sell that cream. And it was always kept in that cave, and it was cold. It was deep enough that it kept it cold. We didn't even have electricity.

I; And didn't have an ice box either, then?

N: Yes, we had an ice box.

I; You did have an ice box?

N; Our ice man came, I think twice a week. And that means that twice a week we had [ice], because you'd use it up. You would chip pieces and put in an iced tea or whatever, and next thing you know, you didn't have ice for a few days. But they kept things real cold. Now those are prized. . .items, because they are solid oak.

I: They are considered antiques, now.

N: Yes, they are. I don't know what my mom and dad did with theirs. Because they still had it, didn't they? (This remark addressed to her husband who is in the room) When we moved to Decatur, they still had it. The year I was married my folks bought a house in town, and moved in to Decatur.

I: What year were you married?

N: In 1944. July 6, 1944. I married a sailor.

I; What a romantic thing to do. I'd like to know what you did for fun. You lived on a small farm in Oakley; you had all these siblings. What did you do for a good time?

N: We made our own fun. I was related to just about everybody within walking distance. And we would get

together. And everybody, not everybody, but many of our family members played music. And even, there was just always a piano available, it seemed like. And my cousins played guitar, and banjo, and mandolin. My dad could play a harmonica. They would play music. There was always popcorn, there was never a shortage. We made homemade fudge. We could just make a party out of practically nothing.

Then we were really involved in church. A little country church, it was Oakley Brick Church of the Brethren. And it still stands, it's still there. Beautiful little brick church. We would go to everything that went on at the church, we were there. We went Sunday, and of course then Sunday evening. Potluck dinners were something we looked forward to.

And the same way with our school. We had just a one room country school. It was called Walnut Grove College. Real impressive name. Everytime there were community meetings, once a month, and we always were there. And my sister and I were always called on to sing a lot at church and at school.

We had wiener roasts. We had hay rides. We had ice--we didn't really have ice skates, but we called it ice skating. We'd slide flat on the bottoms of our feet down the creek and on the pond that was there.

In the summer we had our old john boat. And we would boat down the Sangamon River with--different ones would go fishing. We always fished, or watched. And we went swimming in the muddy old Sangamon River. I don't ever remember being bored.

I: Oh, really?

N: I don't <u>ever</u> remember being bored. I loved to read. And of course there was a shortage of books, because we didn't have any library at all in Cerro Gordo or Oakley at that time. And I had a school teacher. I think I was in the fourth grade when she came, and she stayed until I was in the seventh grade. And she brought me books from the Decatur Public Library. I would read everything she would bring to me. I always liked to read. So if I ever had time, when I didn't have to do chores and babysitting and cherry picking, berry picking--then I read. And I always enjoyed that.

My brothers and sisters, together we made up games that kids today would [think] were not too exciting. But we did such things as roll a hoop. And we had other--we just made up things. We made toys out of whatever was at hand. I always felt like we had a terrific time. But we could make fun out of a lot of things. Like to me,, I can still

remember the fun of riding on a great big hay rack filled with new mown hay. It was just a fun thing. And they would--Dad and my uncles, they would let us help. We would get up into the hay loft and scoop the hay back into the corners while they would lift it up. There were many things that we thought up to do. The family, I think, made a lot of difference. Having cousins, aunts, uncles, and everybody belonged to the same church, went to school together. It really was an extended family, and there was something going on all the time. Wiener roasts, and taffy pulls. Probably no one today would know what that is, but that can be fun.

I; It sounds like you had a very strong sense of community.

N: We did. And a good strong sense of family even with the poverty. I think because of our church. Because with my dad, that was more or less number 1 in our home was our Christian upbringing. And I think that probably gave us a good sense of. . .I think we felt secure. Like I said we were always short of what people consider today as necessities--that we had very little of. But we didn't miss it. And it seems funny, but most of my life, I didn't really think about all of this. Until it just seems like, I don't know, seeing my grandchildren, I think, I begin to kind of compare to what we didn't have. But it was good.

I: It doesn't sound as if you would say that your growing up was less desirable than somebody who is growing up now.

N: Well probably, compared to today's standards it would be unbelievable. But living it and not knowing anything else, I don't think we felt. . . sometimes when my sisters and I get together, rarely, and we think back. We always laugh because we can still laugh about some of the things we did without, and made do with. All summer we went bare-footed. The only kids in our family that had really good clothes were the ones that went to school. And I can remember a lot of times, the younger ones not going to church because there were not good shoes.

A neighbor lady cut their hair. She was not good at it, but she was willing. So she cut the boys' hair. And I remember the first time my two brothers got a store, you know a barber shop haircut. They must have been about, well Wallace and James were only about a year apart, fourteen months apart. So they were just always like twins, red headed and looked a lot alike. And my dad let me come to Decatur, and he left me with the boys to get their hair cut. They were the proudest kids. I think they probably might have been 7 and 8 years old. And they were proud. So that would have made me, I would have been 10--I would have been 11. I was big sister, and I saw to it that they got their hair cut just right.

I: You had to tell the barber how you wanted their hair cut?

N: Oh, yes. Because mom had told me to make sure it parted just so, you know. I was proud to have a part in that. And they were sure proud to get their hair cut without a bowl on their heads. (laughs)

I; So what did the girls do about their hair? Did you just not get hair cuts?

N: It usually grew. The year I was 12 years old, my Uncle Emory, which he was always a great benefactor. The times that we had really good things Uncle Emory saw to it because he, of course owned a business and had more money. And he got me a permanent. I was so thrilled. I got my hair cut and shaped and got a perm. Back in those days, a perm cost, if I remember right, it cost $1.75, and it lasted good for a year. I had the thickest curls. And that was a highlight. He got that for me, he and his wife, for Christmas. They wanted to do something special for me.

I How old were, do you remember?

N: I was 12. Just when it begins to be important to look nice. Up to that point I wore braids mostly. My hair was long, but my hair was straight. And so I wore braids, and they always hung down my back.

I: You say that they got you a permanent. I have a feeling that was a different process than now.

N: It was unbelievable. It was almost like, well it was electric.

I: The permanent machine was electric?

N: It was just like sitting in an electric chair, really. I mean, it was really a big heavy chair. And it had this thing that came over the top of your head. It looked like a huge metal--it was just a big dome. It had these long wires, they were insulated. And it had clamps on [it]. They would roll your hair on metal rods. It was scary, just as scary as it could be. And it got hot, it really did. They would give you a little thing with air, like a little. . . .

I: Bellows like?

N: It was like a little a squeeze ball with a tube that you could blow air because you'd have hot spots. They tried really hard not to get it too close to your skin because you really could get burned. People did get burned with those. And I had, I think 2 or 3 perms of that type, before they finally discovered the wonderful, they called it the cold wave.

I: The cold wave, oh sure enough.

N: The cold wave. And that was a wonderful, that was a boon to women. When I got this first perm they took me to a lady. Actually, it was a farm house. And her name was Pauline Huford. She had a beauty shop in her home. Her parents home. She lived with her parents. And that [the permanent] was real important. I went through all that pain and fear of having this electric thing clamped on my head. It was really something.

I: Sounds like you thought it was worth it afterward.

N: Yes, it was to have curls and look more like. I don't really think that--not everyone had perms. We all were pretty well content with braids.

And another thing we did, it's hard to describe. It's called getting your hair tied up in rags. They would have a strip of cloth, and they would start at the bottom and kind of like a curler, just roll your hair on this rag and then tie it. Of course you had to sleep on these knots. But this way you could go to Sunday School on Sunday morning with curls. That wasn't a comfortable process either. But I did it. I got my hair rolled up, and tied up in rags a lot of times.

But after I got the perm, by then I was old enough to start taking care of my own hair. I remember that the second time, [it was] a couple of years later before I could get another perm. But I was willing to do it. Now, I would really think twice about getting under a machine like that.

I: Yes, I imagine that could really hurt.

(Tape turned off for a moment)

As the eldest of seven children, and a daughter at that, did you have a lot of care of your brothers and sisters?

N: Yes, a lot.

I: Do you remember about when that began? How old were you?

N: I was real, real little. I can remember my mom putting me up, well I climbed up on a kitchen chair, to stand up [to the table], because we didn't have a sink. I stood on a chair to wash dishes. And I know I couldn't have been over 4 years old, and I washed dishes. I started in the morning and I had the dishes done by the time for dinner. It took me that long, because I'd have to get up and down off the chair to make room for more. Because there was such a big family. Of course at that time we didn't have that many. But still it was a lot, because everything had to be cooked in pots. It just made an awful lot of dishes to do.

Then my mom and dad left me with the care of my younger brother and sister, Vivian and Wally, and I was 8 years old the first time. Because I had a conversation with my sister. I was trying to remember the first time we were left alone, so that our parents could come to town and do shopping. They called it trading. They would go to the grocery store and buy things that we couldn't raise. And visit, I think my mom's grandmother, and visited a little bit. And left us, we were there all day alone. And we managed. From then on, I was left a lot with them. I have my different brothers and sisters mentioned that they always kind of felt like I was more mom than sister, because a lot was put on me. But I don't think, I don't believe I ever resented it. It was okay. We had fun together. We weren't always real good. My dad came home sometimes and the house would be just upside down and we would all get in trouble.

I: Do you remember any particular things you did that you weren't supposed to do while they were away?

N: Yes. Using up sugar to make home made candy while they were gone. And another thing that we did that we really got in bad trouble [for] was sneaking down into the cave and getting 2 great big cups full of that heavy cream to make our candy with. Because that was for selling, not--especially not--for candy making. And we did get in really bad trouble for that. There were quite a few things. I don't remember too many. I think I was probably pretty responsible to be that young. Mostly, I was pretty responsible.

I remember one time when mom and dad left us, and it was cold weather. We played, and we let the fire go out in the living room stove. We knew we were in big bad trouble if that fire was out. And we went out and got wood. Really we were so little, we were so little. Carried those big chunks of wood in the house. We didn't have any paper, because we didn't take newspapers or anything. And we didn't know how to, we knew we had to have little stuff to start this fire. So we gathered up as many little sticks and things as we could. And it was getting colder, and colder, and colder.

N: She worked at Hayes Hatchery. And it was hard work, real hard work. About like hospital, not real pleasant work. And back in those days you just, especially with her job where you had to sort eggs, and sometimes sort little baby chickens into different [containers] and packed them to be shipped, and sort eggs. It was kind of dirty. But she would do just anything to keep. . .I think by then we were kind of tired of the, . . we wanted to help ourselves and have some money.

Then I worked at St. Mary's I don't remember how many months. But I will tell you how much I earned. I went to work of a morning at 6:30. And my dad by then was working at Brownie Coal Company. So I would ride in town with him, and he would drop me off. And I worked from 6:30 until 1:30 and then I was off until 4:30. And I went back at 4:30 and worked until 6:30. And I made, I cleared $17.50 every 2 weeks. Not every week. Every 2 weeks. But you wouldn't believe the things I did with that money.

I: What did you do with that money?

N: I saved a lot of it. And I bought clothes and new shoes that didn't come from the Goodwill Store. They had never had anybody else's feet in them but mine. I'll never forget my pride and joy of getting brand new shoes.
My best girlfriend, she got a job at St. Mary's, too. And so we would kind of shared talking our job over. And then we decided, we got a room together, for one summer. Just for a couple of months. We rented a room on Webster Street. Nettie, my friend and I. She was older than me. She was probably almost 17. And she had quit school a long time before that. And this was after I quit school, quit high school. And I knew there wasn't any chance of going back. And I wasn't 16 yet. I was 15 years old.

I; So, you and your girlfriend, both of you under 16, it sounds like. . .

N: No, she was 16.

I: She was 16. And you were 15. You had your own room. And you were independent. You didn't go home at night.

N: No,no.

I: You slept in that room. What did you do for meals?

N: The lady that rented us the room, had a great big basement. It was clean as a pin. She rented out many, she had I don't know how many rooms--quite a few. And we could cook down there. She had a hot plates and a big sink. We would take our few little dollars and go to the A & P store

down on Broadway Street. We would buy just the simplest things and fix ourselves meals. Due to the fact that we worked until 1:30, and Nettie worked in the diet kitchen, and she had access to food. She could bring home things. If there were certain things left over, they just let her bring it home. There were sometimes we had wonderful meals, like beef stew and corned beef hash were some of the things they let her bring home. And fresh fruit, a lot of times. The sisters were wonderful to us there at the hospital. That was one thing, we did love those good Christian women. They were really a big help, especially with providing some meals for us. And we would cook our meals.

We were real proud of that room. It was just as pretty as could be, it was very nice--a nice big house. We didn't do bad there. But of course, my folks didn't really like for me to be living away from home because I was young. That didn't last but, I think probably 2 months--2 and a half months we did that. I went back home and still went ahead and worked.

Then I got a job at a little place called the Blue Classic. It was like a neighborhood Coke shop. It was nice, neat, clean little place. And they [the proprietors] were called, we called them Ma and Pa Hubbard. Because they were just kind of like Ma and Pa to all the kids in the neighborhood. It was on Water Street in the 9 or 10 hundred block. I think it was in the 10 hundred block of North Water Street.I had just decided I wanted a different job. I didn't like that working in the hospital that much. I thought I would before I started it, but I really didn't like it.

So. I got this job. And it was a teeny little bit more money. It wasn't a lot. I think I was making $9 a week.

I: What did you do at the Blue Classic?

N: I waited on people.

I: A waitress?

N: Waitress, yes. I didn't have to do any cooking. They had a woman that cooked and she did the grill cooking. I had to make milk shakes and draw Cokes and make sundaes. It was a lot of ice cream things. I think I would have to drop a basket of french fries every now and then. But it was pleasant work and I worked with young people my own age. I made a couple [of] real nice friends there. That is where I met my husband.

I: When was that?

N: I met him in March of 1943.

Because, you can imagine a 3 room house with no insulation, no storm windows, just linoleum on the floor. It was cold. We got this lighted finally, these little fine things, and put some big heavy pieces in. Then we knelt down, the three of us and prayed that the fire would burn, so we wouldn't get in trouble. (laughs)

I: Were your prayers answered?

N: We really believed it. We trusted. We really believed in God. And the fire did burn. I don't think the first shot made it. We had to make 2 or 3 attempts. But we finally did have that fire going. And that was a lesson. From then on we never let the fire go out. From then on we watched that stove.(laughs)

I: I wondered if you had any sense of things improving over time? If your personal situation improved along with the country's economic situation?

N; It took a long time. I can remember, I think probably the years of 1937, 1938 and 1939 as being real, real bad. And I don't know whether it was because I was old enough to start thinking about, knowing what we didn't have, maybe, or wanting more, I don't know. I think probably around 1940 our situation improved. Dad moved us to a better place. We had a, it still wasn't a big house, but I think it was like four rooms, and we did have a cistern in the kitchen. And we had a big barn, and corn crib, and smoke house, and good out buildings. And we had 6 cows. And of course that meant. . .that's prosperous living because there was a lot of cream to sell, and we made our own butter, and we made our own cottage cheese.

And of course at butchering time we made a party out of it, because everybody, all of the aunts and uncles and our grandma, and everybody would get together. They would start out real early in the morning and they would slaughter. Most generally, each family would slaughter 2 hogs. It was the hardest work you can imagine. But they would work all day long. And my dad had a, I just wish that I would have had him write this down, but he had a recipe for curing, hams and shoulders and it contained quite a few different ingredients. I remember him mixing it together. You can't buy anything on the market that tastes quite like what they would make. Wonderful, wonderful sausage. Each and every person seemed to have their own specific job that they more or less excelled at. It was like I said, but we got to eat fresh cracklings out of the, they would skim them out of the hot fat. And the fat that was left was lard. And they would pour this out and cool it and then cut it into big squares. And the pie crust was unbelievable made with this fresh hog lard. There is nothing quite to equal the cornbread made with cracklings. Which is the pigskin cooked

real real crisp. And that was as good as anything you could [get]. It was a real treat.

But our situation just seemed to improve. Dad had more acres to plant. I don't know how he ever worked as many hours as he did, either. He'd be out long before daylight. I can remember him coming in, tapping me and waking me up. I would get up and go pour hot water through the cream separator and get it all ready to. . .

(end of side Tape 1 Side A)

N: Before we ran out of tape, you were telling me about rising early in the morning and pouring hot water through the cream separator, helping your dad.

I: Yes, I would go with Dad then down to the barn. And we milked these cows. We had to feed the other livestock, and I would help him. Then we would run the milk through the cream separator. All this milk would have to be poured into pans then, the milk that we used--or in glass jars that we put into our old ice box. Then usually I would get breakfast started, which usually consisted of oatmeal. Something real simple. And them mom would get up. This was all done before going to school. We did a days work before we went to school. But everybody did the same. We didn't feel put upon, or abused. It was just what you did to survive. It seemed like we had more. As I said, dad worked real, super, extra hard and put in long, long hours. But things improved for us, just gradually got better.

All of us walked to school, little country school. Walked up there, and of course went to church on Sunday. When war started, my dad being a [pacifist], he couldn't work in a war plant. He wouldn't work in a war plant because he didn't believe in it.

I; It was part of his religious belief not to take part in a war?

N: He wouldn't work in an ordnance plant. Most everybody all around there went to work at--I think Illiopolis is where they had the big ordnance plant and then of course in Decatur. But he wouldn't do that. And so we didn't prosper as much as our neighbors. And I was too young of course to work in a war plant.

I: Did you have any idea how it was that your dad improved his situation before the war started?

N: Well he was going to get a job in town, because he didn't think he was making enough money. It took a lot of money to support 7 kids and try to keep everybody in school. He came to town one day, and he was going to get a job at Wagner's Foundry. He had to take a physical in order to get hired there. And he came home and he told mother that he didn't pass the physical because he had a near rupture. But later we put facts together and realized that was when he discovered that he had heart disease. He just didn't want to tell us. So, he kept that to himself. Of course he couldn't get a job where he really made very much money. So he had to be more or less content with farming. But he did extend his acres and had more livestock, and just did the best he could taking care of us.

I: I was wondering, you talked about he had horses and not any gasoline tractors or anything like that. I wondered when that changed. His mode of transportation when did that change?

N: Actually, I can remember when I was a little child that all we had was horses at first--my earliest memory. In fact we went to church in a horse and buggy. But that wasn't too uncommon because there were quite a few families that drove horse and buggies to church. A trip to Decatur in those days was a trip behind a team of horses. You would have to stop and rest them every so often, pulling a wagon or a buggy. Usually we came in our buggy because it had an area in the back where they could put whatever things they bought that we couldn't raise, like sugar and flour and coffee and such. But it took all day long to come to Decatur. Sometimes we would do our, what they would call, their trading in Cerro Gordo. They had a couple of grocery stores there, and we would go that far.

Then it must have been in 1931 that dad bought, or 1932--I don't know anyway I have a memory of it--a Model-T Ford. So we had a car then. And when there was money for gas and there were tires, then we had a way of getting around. But he never did own a tractor. Never owned any motorized farm equipment at all. He just did it with a team of horses.

And then about 1939 or 1940 he bought an old car. We thought it was just great. It was a Hupmobile. And we were so proud. We thought we were really coming up in the world. It was really kind of a luxury car. Mom decided then that she was going to get a driver's license so she could drive that Hupmobile. She had to go to Monticello which was the county seat, I guess at that time, I don't know. I just know that's where they had to go for her to get her driver's license. It was a real simple procedure. I think all you needed was a dollar and to sign your name. (laughs)

I; That proved you could drive a car, huh?

N: But anyway, then things were a little better. We had a way of getting back and forth. With mom being able to drive well then we got to go a little more. I don't remember how long that car lasted. He had it a couple of years and then it went on the fritz. And then he bought a little Model A. I think at the time I met my husband, my folks were driving a Model A. I don't know what year, how new. It wasn't new, but it got us back and forth.

And dad, at that time, had started working at a job. He started working at a job in 1943. He had just more or less given up, mostly under pressure from mom. She was tired of the hard life. It was hard. She wanted to move back to Decatur because that's where she grew up. And she wanted a more modern house and not the hard work. So he got a job and he worked at Brownie Coal Company. Of course that was a terrible job for him, but we didn't, as I said we didn't know he had a health problem at the time. He kept it all to himself.

And I quit school. There just wasn't any money, because see, we had to pay a school bus to go to Cerro Gordo, is where I went to Cerro Gordo High. It cost $10 a month, which was like the Earth. And besides that you had to have money for school lunch because they didn't have lunches then. Not to mention, buying the books. So when I was, the first year that I worked a job I was 14. And my dad took me to St. Mary's Hospital. They would hire me if I didn't tell anybody my age, because they would get in trouble. So I worked as a little nurse aide. I just did what they told me to do. I did many things. I emptied bed pans, and I carried ice water, and I fetched and carried. And that money was what got me started, so that I thought I was going to get to go ahead and go to school. But at, it must have been about the first of February of my sophomore year, then I had to quit. Even though I had worked, and saved my money, there just wasn't enough. So, then I went back and I worked at St. Mary's Hospital another--quite a few months. I really didn't like that. I just really didn't care for that kind of work that much. But I worked pretty steady from the time I was 14. And my sister, Vivian, the first job she got, she was only 13.

I: What did she do?

N: Mother, father and 7 kids. No bathroom. No running water. We had a well down at the foot of the hill that we drew--we didn't even have a pump--we drew water with a bucket. That was for laundry and everything. Baths, which you got once a week.

I: One bath a week?

N: Yes. In a washtub.

I: Did you heat the water on top of the stove?

N: On top of the stove, and put the tub behind the stove, because it set out away from the kitchen wall. Since I was the oldest, I got to go first. So I got the clean bath.(laughs)

I; (laughs) That was lucky for you.

N: Yes. I always appreciated that I did get to go first to get the bath. They didn't, well actually they would add water. You know, just add, like a tea kettle full of hot water. And then Vivian would get in and scrub, and then another. So, you had a little fresh water. But it wasn't the most sanitary. . .but we survived and were healthy and we were just as happy. We didn't realize how poor we were.

I: And your dad worked for the saw mill then?

N: He worked for the saw mill and he farmed. He leased river bottom land to plant corn and soybeans. And of course raised--we had a couple cows. Then at one time he had more livestock--more cows, more pigs. And he had his own team of horses most of the time.

But back in those days, it seemed like people shared so much. Like when one of our horses was lame, dad just borrowed one to do his farming and to get the corn planted. And all of the farm machinery that he had was, he didn't have anything motorized. It was all done by hand. Like push plows, and pulled with horses. Sometimes we didn't even really--I can't always say we always had enough to eat because feeding 7 kids it was practically impossible. I have no way of knowing how much his salary was. I don't remember ever hearing him say. But it probably was not much.

And then with the garden. We always had great big gardens. From the time I was, probably I think I must have been about 7, they would take us--my cousins and I,would all go pick blackberries. And we'd pick cherries. I can remember being boosted up into a cherry tree. And you picked until they were all picked. Put them in a bucket.

I: All of the cherries off of one tree?

N; You just went from branch to branch as far as you could. You know, everything you could reach. You cleaned it as clean as you could. You wanted to get them all because that meant cherry pies in the winter, and food. That kind of stuff was a treat for us. And of course the garden really kept us going.

I: So your mother probably did a lot of canning then?

N: I do remember that, because I helped. From the time I was just real, real little. And I know that it was anywhere from say 400 to 600 quarts of food that was put up. That's a lot of food.

I: All during the summer?

N: Yes. Everything that we could. . .they even canned meat. When you would butcher, they would fry down, what they would call fry down, sausage and put it in half gallon Mason jars. Then pour grease down over it and turn them upside down.

I: Why did they turn them upside down?

N: The grease would congeal around the top, and it was an extra seal that would keep it. And it really preserved it real well. I can remember months later opening a can of sausage and it was almost like fresh. It was good. It was really good. And of course we mostly had our own eggs.

Then they did the same thing with chicken. They would fry that down. And usually when we did that, like butchering day and cannings and of course threshings too. When they had the threshings, all [of] the women would get together and they would probably cook for 2 days to get enough food. They baked all of their own bread. And when you tried to make dinner for 15 or 16 men--it took a lot of pie.

I: I bet. So did you learn how to cook early then?

N: I learned how to cook that way, you know as far as big. . . I think my husband would have some things to say about my cooking--my early attempts at cooking. But I wasn't used to gas stove, because we had a cook stove. Everything we had was usually pot meals, an awful lot of pot meals.

But I was going to tell you about the chicken. That they would fry it just like they were going to serve it, and they would pack it also in jars. And they made vegetable soup and jellies and jams. So we survived.

I: Did you have a special room in your house where you kept all these hundreds of quarts of things?

I; And you said he was a sailor?

N: He was a sailor, and he was with another girl.

I: (laughs) That doesn't sound like a very auspicious beginning.

N: I was making a milk shake. And I looked up and I saw the cutest, best looking guy I'd ever seen in my life. At that time there were a lot of fellows in uniform. And they all had--kind of would flirt with you a little, or as they say now would "come on" to you a little bit. I got a lot of attention. But he was looking at me, just looking at me. And I looked at him and it was just like, you know. . . kind of turned my world upside down I guess. Anyway, he really made an impression on me. And they get up, he was with, in fact this other boy and girl, there were two couples. The other fellow had been asking me out a lot, And I had not gone. It turns out that he was Bill's (husband) best friend. They had grown up together and gone to high school together--real buddies. But of course I didn't know--had never met Bill, yet.

They left and pretty soon they came back without the girls. He asked if he could walk me home. And I said, "Yes." But I was staying with my great grandmother only 2 doors from the restaurant, because I worked nights. I worked from 4 until midnight. So we walked 2 doors, and I said, "Here it is." (laughs)

But I wasn't really hard to get I guess, because I walked with him. So, then he wanted to know if we would go to the park and take pictures or something. And I said "Sure," like the next day or the next day. Whenever I was going to have a day off, we decided we would go to a movie. I think we had planned on taking pictures, and it rained. We met back over at the Blue Classic, I went in there and he was there. So, we went to the Empress Theater.

I: Do you remember what you saw?

N: I don't remember the show. (To husband) Do you remember? I wish I did. And I remember we went to the Chocolate Shoppe. It was kind of our favorite downtown, really nice place. They made home made candy. You could get wonderful cheese burgers in there. It was a real neat place. We went in there and had a Coke. It was just the most exciting, happy time. We could share a Coke and enjoy ourselves and had the most fun. Take long walks. Then a couple or three days later, he wanted me to meet his folks, his mother. And then I took him to meet my mom, my folks. That was it from then on.

I: That was it, huh? It sounds kind of like a whirlwind courtship.

N: It was very whirlwind. I didn't really stop to think about the situation at all. I think he probably told me before that leave was up that we were going to get married.

I: He told you?

N: He just told me. "We're going to get married." And I don't think, I don't believe I objected at all. (laughs)

I: Had he already been to war, then?

N: He had been to Africa. He was on a troop transport called the James Parker. He had been to Africa. And he was so brown. He was just really, really brown. Really tanned good. He was gone then from, he was home about 2 weeks and we spent a lot of that time together. And thought we got to know each other. Then we wrote letters. He was stationed in Brooklyn. That was his home port, Brooklyn, New York. Back in those days the service men had to ride a train.

I: He had to ride a train from Decatur? Did he catch a train in Decatur?

N: Yes. At the old depot. Many times I've--we have stood down there and waited for the train to come in and load them up and take them out. There would be lots and lots of soldiers on there, and sailors, service men on the train. It took a long time,[they] spent a lot of their time traveling. They always had to leave 2 or 3 days early to make it back. (Husband interjects--It took 16 hours from New York to Chicago on the Pennsylvania line).

And then anyway, he went back to I think, France. He was gone a long time--months. And we wrote letters back and forth. Then at Christmas time he sent me an engagement ring. And he might have had another leave before that, like in the Fall of the year I think we were together. Spent some more time together.

My dad, he was pretty much dead set against me making a commitment. He wanted me to and think and wait. But Bill sent me a diamond at Christmas, and naturally I put that thing on my finger and strutted around, with my hand out in front of all my girlfriends showing. I was engaged.

He was scheduled to get home the next spring. But there was just one delay after another. We got married so quick. I got a telegram. He was supposed to get home in April. And we had pretty well made our plans, and I just about had my folks talked into that we would get married in April. But I had just turned 17 in February. Bill was 19. As it

turned out he did not get home until about the first of July. In the meantime I had gotten a job at Kresge's Dollar Store. I started working downtown. And making a little bit more money. A little bit better working conditions. And I did enjoy that. I liked it a lot better.

\ But anyway, he got home about the first of July. And we were married July 6. We made a real quick--put a wedding together real fast. We had 11 days then before he had to go back again.

And during the time of his service, he served on 5 different vessels. They were--he was on a tanker, and then troop transports. Of course it was a long time before--Well, I got pregnant--first shot. (laughs) He got home though. For the baby. In fact I didn't see him anymore. We just wrote letters. In fact that was how I had to tell him that we were going to have a baby. He got home, and was home at the time that Donna was born. He was home about 18 days at that time. He was home about a week before. But my timing was real good.

I: It worked out. So you got married, had your honeymoon, and you didn't see him anymore, just wrote letters. And the next time he had a leave. . .

N: He came home and we were having a baby. I was just about ready to have the baby. But he was home for her birth. Then he didn't get home to see her, or see us, I think she might have been 6 or 7 months old when he got home the next time. That was only for a short leave, something like 4 days was all the time he could spend at home. He was at home, let's see. The way it turned out, she was born the last of March, the 28th. Bill got home in August, for a 4 day pass. And while he was home was when we [had] VJ (Victory in Japan) no VE (Victory in Europe) didn't we? (addressed to her husband). And he was called back. We got a telephone message or a telegram that he had to leave immediately for that. And so then, when he left. That was a scary time.

I: I don't. . .we had VE day while he was home?

N: Yes, it happened. I think he probably, they knew that a big push was happening. They were really building up to this. And of course the Navy was really involved in this. So Bill had to go back. (Husband interrupts-- "VJ day was victory in Japan") This was VE day. Victory in Europe. (That's right) And you left. We didn't know how long it would be. Or just what he would have to go through before he would be back home again. Bill and his 2 brothers were in the Navy. Bill was the only one that got home, got leaves more than they did, because they both were in the

Pacific Theater. And once they left, that was it. We didn't see either one of them until they were discharged. But Bill got home quite a few times. A few times. But after VE day, I think that was some time in August. Maybe the 2nd or 3rd. That first part of August that he left.

The news then wasn't near as good as it is now. You didn't know what was going on. We didn't, in fact we didn't know. We didn't. Some people in American might have known we had an atom bomb and all these different things, but we really weren't aware of it. The news was pretty sketchy. You didn't have news people right on the battleground as much as you do now. They couldn't tell us what was going on.

I had just picked up the newspaper one evening, and had gone up and sat down on the porch and was going to--we got two papers a day back then. We had the Herald in the morning and the Review in the evening. I was going to read this paper. And there was this great big picture, and it was the ship that he was on. It was the Santa Rosa. It showed a picture of these people. They were bringing back some Japanese dignitaries from another country. I think they had been hiding out, more or less, and they were bringing them back to the United States. [There was] a big article about the Santa Rosa. Of course, we were all excited about this. Then a few days, or it must have been about a month later I read another thing, and it called it the Purple Heart Ship. They were bringing back wounded military people from France, and well all over Europe.

I: Can we back up a little bit and talk about what it was like? You were a young bride, I assume you established your own place then after you were married. Did you have your own apartment?

N: Yes, we did.

I: Did you deal with ration booklets and that kind of thing?

N: When we first got married I was still going to stay with my mom and dad, because they had bought a house at 834 East Leafland Street in Decatur. And I worked for quite a few months and lived with my folks. Then at the time my baby was born, the house next door to his mom and dad had the whole upstairs apartment. It was a nice big house. Big gray stone house. It was on East Cleveland Avenue. And so we rented that apartment for $18 a month. We had to share a bath with the other family, but it had nice big rooms. And we got furnish it ourselves. We went to Leath's furniture company and bought our first furniture. We bought a real pretty, oh just a beautiful carpet for the living room, and a really nice great big sofa bed. It was light blue. And we had a recliner. I think his mom and dad gave us a really

nice chest of drawers. It was fixed up real, real pretty. I was very very proud of it. It was just real comfortable and nice.

The allotment that I got when we got married was $50 a month. But I did have medical. And when our baby was born the whole thing was paid for, doctor, hospital, everything. I had just the same as anybody. It didn't cost us a penny. In fact, when our baby was born. I think she was born about 15 or 20 minutes after 3 in the morning. And by 7 o'clock, I had a full blown double jawed case of mumps.

(End of Tape 1 Side B)

(Tape 2 Side A)

I: This is tape 2, and before we ran out of room on tape 1 you were telling me about the birth of your first baby and getting a case of the mumps after that.

N: I don't think that probably happens very often. But my sister had mumps while I was pregnant. Everybody was concerned that I might get them. The doctor said not to worry, that I would probably have immunity because of my condition, not to worry about it. But I had still gone out and stayed with my in-laws, while my sister was sick with the mumps. But evidently I had picked up that germ. And after my baby was born, I really had a bad case of mumps. Well, you can imagine with just delivering a baby and then having mumps too, I was not in too good a shape. But Bill had to make the decision to either have me put in isolation, and he wouldn't be able to see me, which that wasn't really acceptable to us. And they said he could take me home.

Well we had gotten our apartment all furnished and it was ready for us to move in to. We even had a baby bed and everything was set. But of course there was no way he could take of me. He really didn't even take care of himself. (laughs) His mother would take care [of me]. She was a good mom. She took good care. But she just immediately, he called to tell them what had happened, and they said, "Bring her home." My mother-in-law would take care of the new baby and me. Which was a tremendous thing for her to do. They took us home in an ambulance. The ambulance would not accept any money. They just took us home for free. They were just proud to do it. Everybody was very, very nice.

Well, anyway, my mother-in-law took good care of us. Back when you had babies in those days, you had to stay in bed 10 days. Well I think a lot of women stayed in bed 2 weeks. Anyway, I think about my 12th day I got to get up and walk around the room a little bit. But I was just almost like an invalid. You would be after staying in bed that long.

And then, within a few days I felt good enough to move into our own little apartment and start keeping house and dealing with ration books. Which wasn't really fun, but you soon got the hang of it.

I: How did they work?

N: You were allowed so much for each person that lived in your home. And the things that were rationed were, sugar, meat, shoes, any leather goods. Of course people didn't buy anything except it went for shoes or boots--work boots. And canned goods. Let me think. Let's see. Sugar, meat, canned goods and shoes.

I didn't really have a problem with it. Like I said, I got the hang of it pretty fast. There was a lot of black market stuff that went on. Which we never involved ourselves in. With having several people in the armed forces, we stuck to the letter of the law. Gasoline was rationed which really worked a hardship on a lot of people. But most people just didn't have cars. Because they had stopped making cars too. Everything was going into military.

According to your job description, you could have an A, C or a B gas card. We didn't have a car, so I didn't have that problem. Bill's folks didn't have a car. And when my parents moved to Decatur, they didn't have a car. Dad sold his. So we didn't have to worry with that. In fact I still have some ration books--the covers, and a few of the stamps. I saved. They are in that wooden chest upstairs in my closet.

I: Do you think they would photocopy?

N: Oh, I'm sure they would. They're old. I saved some of the telegrams that Bill sent me during the war. Those ration books are in an envelope. I just managed to keep some of them. They are practically crumbling. But I do have them.

I: That would be great to have them.

N: I'll dig those out then. In fact, you probably could just have them if you want them.

I: We should probably just make photocopies for these purposes.

N: All right.

I: That would be great. I think we are kind of coming to the end here. Do you have any remembrances particularly of your World War II time? For instance do you remember VJ day? How did you learn about it?

N: Well, I guess to go back to the beginning. We were at my Aunt Effie and Uncle Harvey's house the day that we heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. We were playing Monopoly around their living room table. They had a big, what they called, a library table in the living room. And we could sit around that and play games. I was with my 3 cousins and my sister and myself.

My Uncle Harvey was laying on the couch in the dining room listening to the radio, and we heard him jump up and he screamed, "Come here, come here." Then he came to the door and he just acted so excited and he said,"Get in here. I want you to hear this." So, we all gathered in there around the radio. And we heard President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He had a real serious voice. He was telling us that the Japanese had pulled a sneak bombing attack on Pearl Harbor. And that we were at war.

I was young enough, and dumb enough that we were excited about this. We sat around though and listened. We couldn't understand Uncle Harvey and Aunt Effie. They sat side by side. And they were really sad. They acted so scared and sad. About that time we heard Bud Blair knocking on the front door, my cousin. And he comes in and he said "Boy, we'll lick 'em. We'll lick 'em in a month." he said "I'm going to go sign up. " Well, he wasn't old enough he was just only sixteen. But he was ready to sign up. And Howard he was going to clean his gun and he was going to enlist, too.

Then we went home. And I remembered my dad listened to that radio practically night and day that first couple of days. And he cried. I couldn't figure this out. But then later on I thought, really our German heritage. A lot of our family members would be fighting our country. And Dad, really grieved over it. He did, he hated it.

But then, we were listening to our dad's point of view and his side of how terrible a thing it was for our country. And our cousins came flying up in a car, wanting us to go with them. And we came to Decatur. That is the first time in my life I'd ever seen or heard and "Extra, Extra read all about it." I'd seen it in a movie. And I'd always thought that sounded so special and so great, but there were news boys just practically on every corner.

We drove around and, around and, around the transfer house. That is when the transfer house was in the Lincoln Square. And people were cheering and yelling, and making threats about what all was going to be done, and how great our country was. I've never seen a country get so wound up in, so pulled together so fast as they did at the beginning of World War II. At least that was my view of it.

Of course, after you get into it, and you see the boys leaving. And you see the people stand in [factories] making munitions, long, long, hard hours. It really wasn't such a glorious thing, but still they really fought and stuck together.

But when the VJ day. I think we probably had quite a celebration for VE day. I remember when Bill left because he was called back off of his leave. And I can remember us going downtown. People were so happy. Strangers hugging strangers. Everybody was really jubilant over this-- the end of the European conflict. And then everybody concentrated on the Pacific. Because we weren't done yet. And Bill's 2 brothers were still over on that side.

I think when VJ. (To husband) Were you home before VJ day? (Husband, "No.")

Anyway, it was just like a great big street party. People out in the streets, and you'd hear everybody [blowing] horns and train whistles. A big celebration. People were more than ready for it to be done.

I: The book that I read said that. . . (Husband--I believe I was home during VJ day.)

N: I think you were. (Husband says, I believe I was.)

I: They said there was a big parade downtown.

N: Yes, a big street party.

I: Sheriff Shepper had put a ban on girls wearing shorts, and that the girls wore shorts anyway on VJ day.

N: It was just a big, big street party. People were just happy. I didn't remember about the shorts. But I do remember being downtown.

I: Did you take your baby downtown?

N: Oh, yes. I wanted her to know, I mean she'd never remember. But she was more or less seeing history being made, and I wanted her to be part of it. My sisters-in-law. Two of my sisters-in-law and myself. Oh I can remember his mom and dad and everybody was so happy to have it over. And people celebrated in different ways. The churches were full. When you read about it in books it seems like a short time. But to live through it, it was a long time.
But you know of all of those cousins of mine, and my husband and his brothers and all of them that left, everybody came home.

I: You didn't lose anybody in World War II?

N: We didn't lose anyone. I knew one boy, and his name was Orin Bachstein. I didn't even go to school with him, I just knew him. He was married to one of my very, very good girlfriends. A girl I grew up with, and went to school with, and it was her husband. And he was killed, but it was not in combat. It was an accidental killing--train.

I: That's miraculous [that no one else was killed].

N: It was a miracle. Because Buddy, Bud Blair, and Howard Berkwin, and all of the McClure boys, there were 2 or 3 of them and they all wound up going. And the Brownings and Gene Brown, well you know the Browns--Elinor's brother. And all of those kids. They all came back.

I; Amazing.

N; It sure was.

I: I was wondering how you think being a child of a depression era, and being a young woman during a time of war that probably 95% of the country was absolutely behind, barring conscientious objectors, do you think that shaped your later life in any way?

N: Oh, I'm sure of it. Yes, I think that to go through those kind of years, it gives you a way of enduring. You just endure. I think you find appreciation and joy, probably in a lot more. Maybe what a lot of people would say are simple things. I think your family, you are more dedicated to. I feel personally, that it made me more dedicated to my family.

I think it gave me--it gave me more than it took from me. To put it simply. I think it gave me a way to endure, and to enjoy, and to just be able to appreciate what we all have all of the time. But when you do live that, it was a simpler time. People didn't expect as much, they worked harder. And I think it helps you to have an appreciation. And I think you appreciate the things that are really important.

France
Christmas
Kresge's Dollar Store
Donna [Siburt]
Japan
VJ Day [Victory in Japan]
VE Day [Vicory in Europe}
United States Navy
Europe
Pacific Theater
American
Herald
Review
Santa Rosa
Japanese
Purple Heart Ship
Leafland Street
East Cleveland Street
Leath's Furniture Company
Decatur, Illinois
Pearl Harbor
Aunt Effie Burkwin
Bud Blair
Howard Burkwin
German
Orin Bachstein
McClure
Brownings
Gene Brown
Elinor
Mason jars
Monopoly

LOU ANN (WAGNER) SIBURT

WORD LIST

Lou Ann Wagner Siburt
Ruth Siburt
North Edward Street
Ada Lucille Moreland Wagner
Alva Otis Wagner
Decatur, Illinois
Vivian Elaine
Lionel Wallace
James Alva
Sharon Joan
David Gavan
Dion Richard
Emory Wagner
Harvey Burkwin
Sangomon River
Oakley, Illinois
Oakley Brick Church of the Brethren
Walnut Grove College
Cerro Gordo, Illinois
Decatur Public Library
Christian
Pauline Huford
Illiopolis
Wagner Foundry
Hupmobile
Model-T Ford
Monticello, Illinois
Brownie Coal Company
St. Mary's Hospital
Hayes Hatchery
Goodwill Store
Webster Street
Nettie
A & P Store
Broadway Street
Blue Classic
Ma and Pa Hubbard
North Water Street
Bill
Empress Theater
Chocolate Shoppe
Coke
Africa
James Parker
Brooklyn, New York
Chicago, Illinois
Pennsylvania [Rail Road]

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A 45 GA=BROOKLYN NY 28 1111A

MISS LOU WAGGONER=

556 EAST LEFLAND DECATUR ILL

APR 28 AM 10 45

HELLO DARLING IM SHIPPING OUT SORRY TO LEAVE BE TRUE LOVE=

BILL=

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

WESTERN UNION

1201

(17)

SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter

NT = Overnight Telegram

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6123 12 TOUR=JERSEYCITY NJ 6 614P

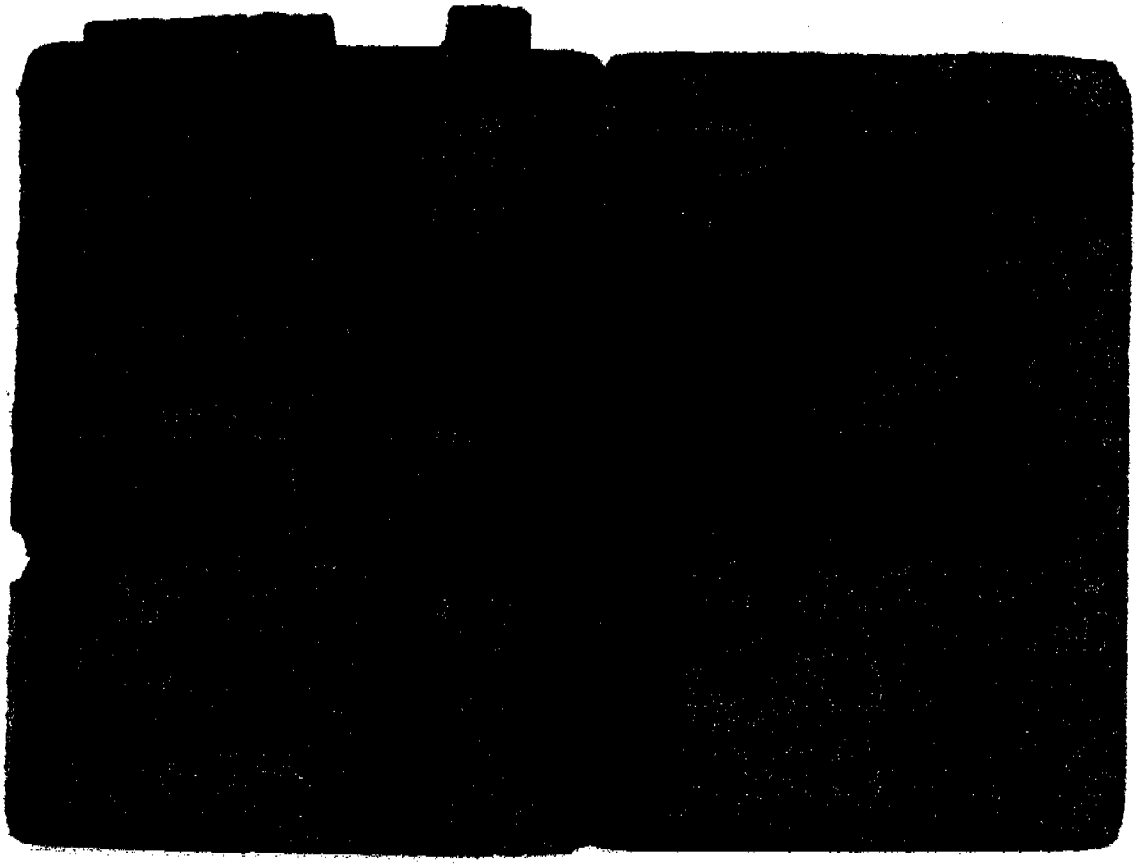
MISS LOU ANN WAGGNER= Decatur

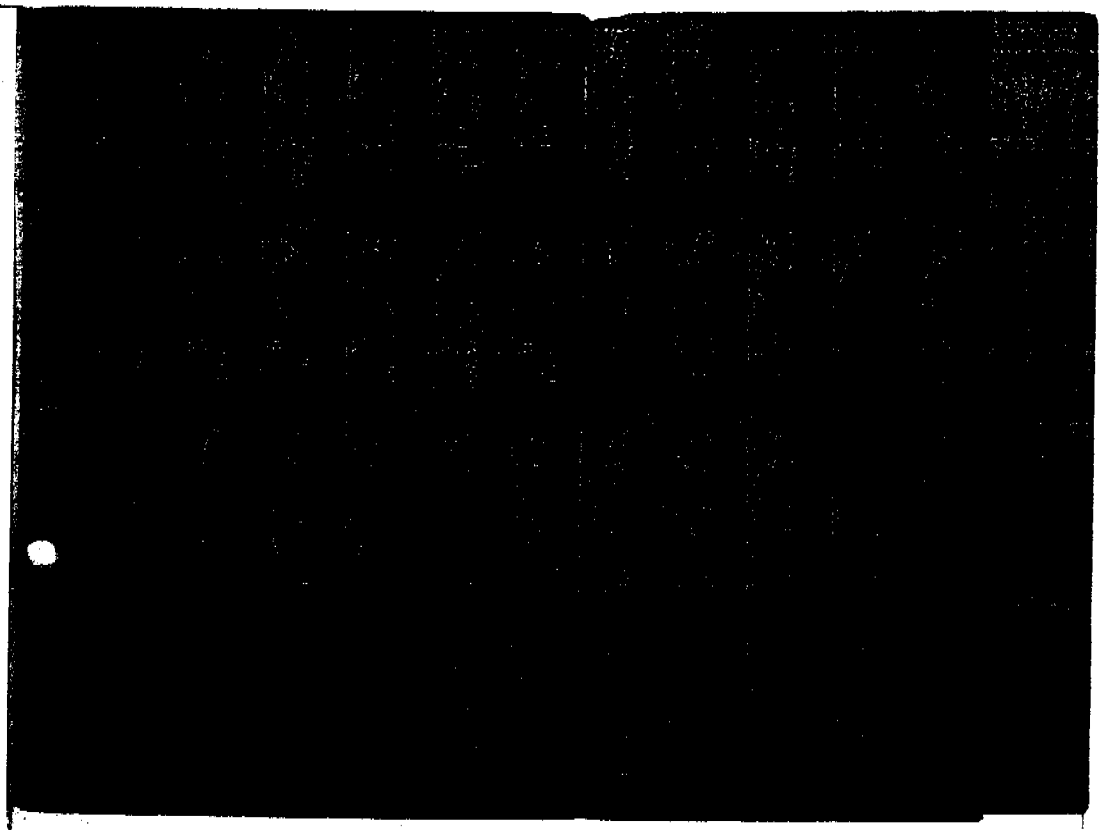
6 PM 6 20

HELLO HONEY GOT IN OK FEELING THINKING OF YOU

CONSTANTLY LOVE=

BILL





Narrator William E. Sibert Address 1230 N. Edward, Decatur, IL Phone (217) 429-4052

Birthdate 2/16/1925 Birthplace Mahomet, IL Date(s) & Place of Interview

Interviewer Ruth Sibert Address 3850 E. Cerro Gordo Decatur Phone 217 429-4052

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WILLIAM E. SIBURT INTERVIEW

PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of tape recorded interviews conducted by Ruth Siburt for Sangamon State University Archives during the fall of 1993. Ruth Siburt transcribed the tapes as well as editing the transcript.

William E. Siburt was born February 16, 1926 in Mahomet Illinois. He grew up in Decatur, Illinois, the eldest of 6 children. From his childhood days when he describes hunting with a rifle along with his two younger brothers by the age of 9, to his young adult days of service on transport/troop ships during World War II, Mr. Siburt's memoir is colored by his adventurous and self-assured nature.

Ruth Siburt enjoys writing and has published several picture books and articles in the area of foster care. She is enrolled in the Sangamon State University English program, as well as employeed full-time as Circulations Lead at Richland Community College's Learning Resources Center in Decatur, Illinois. She is married and the mother of one son and one foster daughter.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

WILLIAM E. SIBURT INTERVIEW

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William Edward Siburt
Tape 1 Side A
November 7, 1993
1230 N. Edward Street
Decatur, Illinois
Ruth Siburt
Sangamon State University

I: Today is November 7, 1993. My name is Ruth Siburt, I am the interviewer and my narrator is William Siburt. He has agreed to talk to me about his growing up during the depression times, and also about World War II and his service in the Navy.

Okay, Mr. Siburt, when were you born?

N: I was born in 1925.

I; And what were your parents' names?

N: James E. Siburt and Martha Lucinda Daniels Siburt.

I: And where were you born?

N: Mahomet, Illinois.

I: Do you have any siblings?

N: Yes, I have 6 no 5.

I: Five. And are they all boys or all girls?

N: I have 2 brothers and 3 sisters.

I: Did you live all of your life in Mahomet?

N: Oh,no. I don't even remember. . .

I: You don't remember Mahomet?

N: No, I don't remember Mahomet.

I: What is your earliest memory? Can you tell me that?

N: My earliest memory was--I think I can remember living in Decatur, out west on a little bitty farm. They called it Shaw heights. It is out on West Main Street. It's not there now. And that's the earliest I can remember.

I: You remember living in this little house? On a little farm?

N: Yes, that was west of Decatur. The rest of my boyhood was around Latham, Warrensburg.

I: So, you didn't live in Decatur proper most of the time?

N: No. We moved around real often.

I: You moved a lot?

N: We moved a lot. I'd say maybe every 5 or 6 months or so.
I: Oh, really. That much?

N: We moved to Decatur when I was 7 years old. I remember Dad working for a lot of tenant farmer, or he was a tenant farmer. We moved around out there. And I remember one special little church we went to in Latham.

I: What do you remember about the little church in Latham?

N: I remember they heated the baptismal pool with a big piece of iron. They'd take and build a big bonfire outside. And they would heat this piece of iron and they'd take it in and stick it in this pool until they got the pool warmed up. In the winter time.

And I remember one time we went to a funeral. I don't remember who the person was or anything about it. But I remember we went to this funeral. My Aunt Juanita, who was my dad's sister, and she wasn't very much older than I was, about maybe 2 years. Maybe not that much older. But anyway she gave us all handkerchiefs and said we were supposed to cry. And we waited and waited. (laughs) Anyway we never did cry.

And I remember one time there specially, that they had a big potluck at this church. And my brother, Jim, he couldn't have been more than 2 or 3 years old if he was that old. And they had this big bowl of butter beans. And I think he ate that whole bowl of butter beans. (laughs) He got sick. Of course he would that was just too many butter beans.

And I remember when one of the girls was born, I don't remember which one it was. It must have been Marjie. Dad sent us--we lived in an old house out north of Latham, an old farm house. Dad sent us up to the neighbors. Me and my 2 brothers and 2 sisters, I don't know, somebody must have been taking care of one of my sisters. I remember, Joann. Jim and Bob, being at the neighbors. And we were there until real late at night. And then when we went home, Mom, she had a baby. And I think Dad delivered that baby. I believe. The doctor didn't make it out there.

But I can remember quite a bit about living at this certain special place.

My Grandpa Daniels gave us an old dog. It wasn't an old dog, it was a little dog. He said her name was Betsy. So we called her Betsy. And we'd get a club and this old dog and we'd go out, and I know I couldn't have been but about 5 years old. And we'd go out in the fields, along the ditches we would catch rabbits by hand. Run them down. Chase them down by hand. That old dog, he could lead us right to the rabbit. And one time, we had a cob house. And we filled that cob house up with rabbits. We must have had 20 or 30 rabbits in this cob house. And Dad he walked out there and opened that cob house, he was a jumping around and rabbits were flying . . .

I: Oh, the rabbits were still alive?

N: Yes.

I: You caught them alive?

N: Yes, and they came a running out of there. And I don't know how we kept from getting bit, but I don't think we ever did.

I: You caught them with your hands? Just with your hands. Grabbed the legs or ears or whatever you could?

N: Grab them behind the head or by the hind legs, and hold on real tight. (laughs)

I: So, you didn't eat the rabbits, you just caught them?

N: Just caught them and put them in the cob house.

I: So you could surprise your dad.

N: Well, we did this all the time. This was just this one certain time when we really had a bunch of rabbits. (laughs)

From there, well Dad moved to--he got a job in Decatur. He got a job in Decatur, I'm getting ahead of my story here. This farmer that we lived in his house, Dad had worked for him a little bit. And the farmer couldn't pay him. He offered Dad a bushel of corn. Well, Dad couldn't sell the corn, no more than he could. But I remember this guy had this big turtle. It seemed like to me that this turtle was about half as big around as this table. That means he was like, what, 3 foot across. We would get on this turtle, and he would walk with us. The turtle, he would walk and we'd stand up on him.

Dad got the job in Decatur at Linxweiler Printing Company. It was on South Park Street, by Central Park. We didn't. . .he got the job in Decatur, but we didn't move to Decatur, we moved to on Sunnyside Road. Oh shoot, that must be 5 miles from there uptown. And Dad used to walk that.

I: Every day?

N: Every day. Walk in, and he'd catch the bus sometimes, when he had a dime. Walk in as far as the bus line and ride. But a lot of times he walked it all the way.

And I remember one Christmas that, it was getting pretty close to Christmas. And it was cold. Dad, he would take and go in and he would stay all week, in town all week. And he would come home on the week ends. It was pretty rough. I didn't realize it then.

I remember when we did move to Decatur, we moved over on the 900 block West Cushing Street. And I was 7 years old. But we would still go hunting, even then. We could just walk out our back door and in 2 blocks, we were in the country. We could take a 22 rifle, and load her up on the front porch and walk off with it. Nobody said anything.

I: How old were you when you had a rifle?

N: Oh, about 9.

I: You handled a rifle when you were 9?

N: Oh, yes.

I: You are the eldest in your family, right?

N: Yes.

I: And did your brothers even younger than you handle a rifle, too?

N: Oh, yes.

I: Did your dad teach you how?

N: Oh, yes. My dad and my Uncle Pete, that was Dad's brother. He had been shooting a gun since he was 6 years old. He was what, only 3 years older than me. Yes. We a gun toting family. (laughs) And fishing poles.

And in the summer time, we didn't have to wait until school was out. Even if school was on, if it was a real

nice day, we would still go fishing. We would fish that little pond out there, or go down to the dam.

I: Little pond, out where?

N: Out at Fairview Park, Dreamland Lake, they call it.

I: Dreamland Lake?

N: Yes. We would go down to Stevens Creek. Summers we spent our days out there. We spent our summers out there.

I: Did you take food with you, or just miss lunch, or come home for lunch?

N: Well, sometimes. It depends on what we were going to do. If we were going to stay all night, why we would take food with us.

I: You just stayed all night on the creek, just you boys?

N: Oh, yes. We would go out there and camp for a couple of days. Come back home for a couple of days. Go back and camp for another couple of days.

I: Did you bring your fish home, then for your mom to cook up?

N: Very seldom. Once in awhile we would.

I: It sounds as if you had a great deal of independence.

N: I'll never forget the time old Bob [brother] picked up them catfish. He found them in, it was where a creek had overflowed. When the water went down, these catfish were still laying there. And they were just barely alive. And old Bob he picked them up and he was carrying them. This guy came along in a car, he says "Where you guys going?" We says, "we're going home." He says, "Well, I got to take you home." He seen that we had these fish. He wanted to see what was going to happen when our mom, seen them fish. So you can imagine what happened.

I: What did happen?

N: Oh, man. [Mom said] "Get them things out of here! Where did you get them things. They're dead." "Well, they was a kicking a little bit," Bob says. (laughs)

I: It sounds as if you had a lot of independence as a child.

N: I think so. They kept an iron, specially after we got so

old. After I got to be a teenager, they kept their foot down pretty good.

I: Oh, did they?

N: Yes.

I: So, when you were younger, it sounds like you had pretty much free rein. You could go camping if you wanted.

N: Oh, yes. We could do anything we wanted. As long as it wasn't rob a band or something. One time we got into an argument with the guy next door. And my dad doesn't even know this. I don't think any body knows this but me and my 2 brothers. But this guy's name was Lawfry. Real good friend of mine, or was. But he came walking up. We had done something to his boy. I don't know, we had shot him with a BB gun or something. Anyway he came a strutting down the alley. We may have seen him coming. So we went and got, Dad had an old 12 gauge shot gun, and we went and got that gun. We got down in the landing, the doorway. And Jim he had one end of the barrel, and Bob he had the stock end and I was going to pull the trigger. And we had a shell in that gun! I don't know what ever kept us from shooting that guy. But we had the gun pointed at him.

I: Is that all you remember about it that you had the gun pointed at him?

N: Yes.

I: You don't remember him coming up knocking on the door?

N: He didn't come up.

I: Oh, he saw you.

N: He stopped! Yes, he got about half way up through the yard, and he stopped. And he turned around and walked away. We never did hear any more about it. We put the gun up and shut up. (laughs) I don't know what kept us from pulling that trigger. It was all cocked and ready to go. I guess the good Lord was watching us or something. Had a hand on our head or shoulder or something.

I: Trying to pour some brains in your ears. (laughs)
So, do you remember it being hard. . . I mean you had the time when your father got paid in corn and couldn't sell the corn. Do you remember being hungry, ever?

N: I remember one time Mom boiled wheat. But Dad and Mom, they wouldn't take charity, no way. My dad would go over to his mom's because, they weren't rich, but they were pretty well off. They were pretty well set up. But he wouldn't ask. He would go over there with intentions to ask. But he wouldn't ask for nothing. I remember one time and he couldn't ask, well, Grandma called him back and gave him a great big sack of I don't know what all was in it. Home made bread and what else.

I: So she had determined that he had needed something?

N: Yes. She read between the lines. I don't know who told that story. (Wife "Rena") Rena, told that story.

I: So, did your dad work at Linxweiler all of the time that you lived in Decatur?

N: No, he worked there for, I would say around 10 years. Maybe not that long. He may have worked there 5 or 6 years before he got to working extra for the Express Company. Railway Express Company was right next door to Linxweiler's. He got to working extra for him. And he got to working more for him than for Linxweiler's, and pretty soon he just. . .

I: He just switched over.

N: And when he switched over, well Grandpa moved to town and took his job at Linxweiler's.

I: Well, that worked out. Is that while you were still a child living at home, that he moved over to Railway Express?

N: I was still at home, yes. But I was getting about 14 years old or 15. I was getting older, up into the teen age years. We thought that was really something, because when he was working this special job. I think they called it the money clerk's job. And he would come home for lunch, and he always had a pistol in his back pocket. And we thought that was something for my dad to carry a pistol in his back pocket.

I; Did you have jobs along when you were a kid?

N: I worked for the Linxweiler's Printing Company.

I: Oh, did you?

N: I was an errand boy.

I; And when did that start?

N: When my Grandpa took the job there I worked for the Linxweiler's printing company. I worked as an errand boy for them.

I: Do you know how old you were when you started for them?

N: I believe I was 16.

I: Do you remember how much you made? Did they give you an hourly wage?

N: Eight dollars a week.

I: Eight dollars a week. They paid you by the week?

N: I got $8 a week.

I: Do you know about how many hours you worked for that? That was like a before and after school job?

N: No. I had quit school.

I: You had quit school?

N: I had quit school. I had dropped out of high school. I was in the 10th grade. I dropped out of high school.

I: Did you just lose interest in school, or was there some reason why you quit?

N: I guess,I don't remember.

I: You don't remember why you quit school, you just did?

N: Well, I got into it with the teacher. It wasn't anything bad. I didn't think. But, anyway I was supposed to apologize to this teacher, and I wouldn't do it. So, they called Dad and Mom and got talking to them. I still wouldn't do it. So, I just quit.

I: Do you remember what the argument was over?

N: It really was kind of just a, I had come in for class and had my books there. And I happened to knock one of them off on the floor. And I picked it up and she says, "Go outside and sit in the hall." So, I went outside and I sat in the hall. And pretty soon she came out there and she said, "You go on down to the Dean's office." So I go down to the Dean's office. I sat there for awhile. And he still said, "You have to apologize to that teacher." I said, "I got nothing to apologize to that teacher for." And I told him what happened, but he still said, "You go apologize to that

teacher." I never did apologize to that teacher.

I: What school was this?

N: Decatur High School.

I: Do you remember the teacher's name?

N: No.

I: That got kind of out of hand. Got blown into a big deal?

N: Yes.

I: And then you got the job at Linxweiler's so that would be. . .

N: I worked there for pretty close to a year. And then they came out with this NYA [National Youth Association] trade school. And I joined that and I took training as a welder. For, I think it was about 11 or 12 months.

I: Is the NYA something that President Roosevelt instituted?

N: Yes. And they paid you so much. You got a salary. It wasn't very much, I don't remember what it was. But then Art Williams and I, he was a buddy of mine, I went all the way through school with him. And we both took this training. And soon as we both got done with that we went to Peoria. We were going to get a job welding. We had a job on line at Laturnal [manufacturing], but they kept saying. But I'm 17 years old. I'm draft meat, you know. So, they wouldn't hire us. They just kept playing us on. So, I came home and I joined the Navy. And Art he was going to join, too. And he went with me to join, but his eyes wouldn't pass. He couldn't pass the eye test.

I: So you joined the Navy when you were 17?

N: Yes.

I: What year was that? Was the war already going?

N: In 1942 in June.

I: So the war was already in progress when you joined the Navy. Where did you take your training at?

N: Great Lakes.

I: At Great Lakes.

N: Boot was at Great Lakes.

I: Boot. What was the training like for boot camp? Do you remember what you did? Do you remember what they taught you?

N: It was just about like what, I was in the Boy Scouts, you know when I was a kid. Really it was just about the same as that is, only a lot harder.

I: In what way, harder?

N: I mean there was a lot more of it. Drilling. I went drilling when I was in the Boy Scouts. It wasn't anything new to me only there was more of it. I mean when they got done with you, you were glad to stop and rest. (laughs) They would really work you over.

I: How long? Six weeks, were you at boot camp for 6 weeks?

N: Six weeks.

I: What did drilling consist of?

N: Oh the same thing as it does now. You march to cadence. And you have these certain steps you have to take. About face, left face. All that. It is all the same.

I: So, it was like parade stuff, really?

N: Yes. That's what I said, if you were going to parade out here you would do the same thing in the parade that you do there.

I: And you did that all day long?

N: Well, you did it 3 or 4 hours at a time.

I: Did they have physical training or gun training, or anything like that, too?

N: I hade my gunnery training in New Orleans.

I: After boot camp.

N: In a place called Algiers.

I: Algiers, New Orleans?

N: Yes.

I: Is Algiers like a camp in New Orleans?

N: It is just a Naval station in New Orleans. It's called Algiers. It used to be the Armed Guard. I don't know if it is still the Armed Guard, or not. It probably is.

I: What kind of guns did they train you on?

N: I was trained on all of them.

I: On all the guns on the ships.

N: All except the 5 inch 38's. Yes. And the 16 inch of course we weren't trained for them. We were trained for 20 millimeters, 50 caliber rifles, side arms.

I: So, out of boot camp you went to Algiers, New Orleans and trained there on guns.

N: Yes, had gunnery training.

I: Then what happened after that?

N: Then we were sent to Charleston, South Carolina and got on the James Parker. It was a troop ship.

I: A troop ship. A troop ship transports troops?

N: Soldiers.

I: Soldiers. And where did it go to and from?

N: Our first trip was to South Africa. Where was it? Dakar, South Africa.

I: Dakar?

N: Dakar, South Africa. It's been a long time.

I: Yes. So, did the troop ships just pull up to dock and the troops got off, no trouble at all? Or was it night landings?

N: The troops got on the ship in Brooklyn, New York. We went from Charleston to Brooklyn and we loaded troops. Then we went to Dakar, South Africa and unloaded troops on land.

I: Then back from South Africa, were you empty or did you take something back?

N: Mostly, we were empty. We had a few nurses and people who were doing business, I suppose for the United States government. We would bring back home.

I: And what was your title? You were like a seaman or. . .

N: I was a seaman, then when I left the James Parker, I was a gunner's mate.

I: A gunner's mate?

N: One thing happened when we got on the James Parker in Charleston, they--we all had to stand guard. And I think it was 3 on guard at a time. And we all had side arms. They were 38 special revolvers. And we all strapped them on. And it didn't mean anything to me, because I'd had a gun all of my life. But there was this guy from Chicago, by the name of Spinka, and I can't remember the other guy's name, but they both were on guard and they had their guns on. And this is the first day on this ship. And one guy says, "Draw, you dirty skunk." The guy draws and shot him right in the belly. They toted him off the ship. I guess he lived.

I: They were just playing around?

N: They were just playing around. But that is what can happen.

Anyway getting back. . .

I: How long were you on the James Parker?

N: I was on there a year. Maybe a little over a year. I was on there long enough to get a 30 day leave. And then when I came home that was when I met you (to his wife). I was home for 30 days.

I: That was when you met your wife?

N: Yes. And then I went back on the Fort Niagara. That was a tanker.

I: I am really ignorant about this stuff, but the tanker carried oil, or fuel, or. . .

N: We carried high test gasoline.

I; High test gas.

N: Not at first. We went up and down the east coast down to Aruba and Curacao. I don't know what we had on. I didn't pay any real attention. But we were shuttling something back and forth. We would unload and come back, whether we were picking up crude oil or something. I don't know.
But then when we took off over the ocean we had high test gasoline.

I: So, were you supplying like the war trucks and the tanks with the high test gasoline?

N: Yes. I was in what they called the Armed Guard. Our motto was "We Aim to Deliver."

I: We aim to deliver.

N: That was our motto.

(End of side A Tape 1)

I: We stopped to turn the tape over, and we were talking about being on the Fort Niagara, and transporting high test gasoline back and forth from the east coast of the United States to Africa.

N: Yes, to Dakar.

I: Most of the time to Dakar.
(Wife says, You were in a lot of countries)

N: Yes. It has been so long ago, it is hard to remember. We could have been going to France with that gasoline. But any way, the Fort Niagara I was on it for about 9 months. I wasn't on it too long. And then I got a 15 day leave. That's when we got, no, no. . . Anyway, from this ship I went on the S O Little Rock. It was another tanker.

I: What did the S O stand for?

N: That was Standard Oil.

I; Standard Oil Little Rock?

N: Yes. Esso was Standard Oil. E-S-S-O.

I: E-S-S-O. Okay.

Scotland. And we were there for about 3 days. And I still don't know why. Because we pulled out of there and went back down to France--Le Havre, France. Then we went back to the states, and I got another leave off of that ship.

(Addressed to wife) What ship was I on when we got married?

(Wife, that is when we got married.)

This was when we got married. And then I went on the Walter Kitty. Yes. That is what took me so long. I couldn't get that leave in time.

Anyway, I got another leave off of the Little Rock. And I went on a Liberty Ship called the Walter Kitty.

I: What is a Liberty Ship?

N: It was a ship that they built for the war--during the war. It was a cheap ship. It was made of concrete. The hulls were made of concrete.

I: The hulls of the ship were concrete?

N: Yes.

I: Did it haul?

N: It hauled goods.

I: Not like a tanker, or a troop ship?

N: No, no. It just hauled goods. We had pipes and, what we had was a pipeline for Iran. The oil wells in Iran.

I: That is what you hauled, pipe for over there?

N: We had the pipe. We had the docks on our ship. That the ships pull up and load oil. We had the equipment it takes to do that. We were the first ship in there with this kind of stuff.

I: I forgot the name of the ship, I need to write it down.

N: The U.S.S. Walter Kitty,no the S.S. Walter Kitty. Steam Ship Walter Kitty.

I: Tell me about the ship with the concrete. What did it look like?

N: It looked just like a big old bath tub with a cabin in the middle of it, really. It was just built to haul. They built them in 30 days. They had 2, or 3, or 4 places on the west coast where they built them and places on the east coast where they built them. And they would throw them together in 30 days. That is how we won the war is getting so much stuff out there.

I: Were they very sea worthy?

N: Oh, yes. They took them out of commission pretty quick after the war was over. (laughs)

I: They didn't want to push their luck too far?

N: They were sea worthy, and they did the job.

I: What kind of accommodations did you have as a crew member on the ship.

N: Gunner's mates had their own quarters. I was a gunner's mate all through that. I had my own quarters.

I: So, did you have a room to yourself, or you slept with. .

N: Usually 2 guys. One ship I had the room all to myself.

I: Oh, really?

N: I was in charge [of], it was usually 3 or 4, 20 millimeters and a 3 inch 50. That is what I was expert at, or call it expert.

I: So, you had to keep the guns operational?

N: Keep the guns operational, yes.

I: Did you ever have to fire them?

N: Oh, yes.

I: Did you fire them at enemy ships, I take it?

N: No. I was never in battle, except with the 20 millimeters. But the Germans got on us when we were going to France, but that wasn't on this ship.

I: What ship was that on?

N: That was on the Little Rock.

I: And so you had Germans firing at you then?

N: Yes. But it was only about 2 days. We pulled out of that convoy.

I: That's when you went to Scotland?

N: That's when we went to Scotland.

I: It must have been pretty frightening though, for the time you were in it?

N: It was kind of scary.

I: But the Little Rock didn't get hit that time?

N: No.

I: Did other ships around you get hit?

N: Oh, I have been in convoys where a lot of ships were hit, yes. And ammunition ships, they hit them and there is just a big old cloud of smoke. And when the smoke clears there is nothing there. They are gone. Those were mostly Liberty Ships, that carried ammunition.

But we had pipes on there [SS Walter Kitty] and we went into Iran.

I: When you went in to these ports did you get to get off of the ship?

N: If you were there long enough, yes. We would get liberty.

I: What are some of the places you got to see that way?

N: Dakar, Le Havre, Scotland, Aruba, Curacao, Beaumont,Texas.

I: Did you like any of the places better than any of the others?

N: They were all the same. It seemed to me. (Wife says, Arabia) Arabia. That was--Iran. We were tied up there at Iran for about 30 days.

I: Did you get to meet any of the people there?

N: Oh, yes. I didn't eat any food, there. I would starve to death before I would eat a hamburger over there. I would come back to my ship.

I: And then after the Walter Kitty, was that your last ship?

N: Walter Kitty I was on about 16 months. I was gone a long time. I was gone over a year I think. We got back to Brooklyn--(did we go into Brooklyn). We weren't gone that long.

Anyway, we got off of that on to the Santa Rosa. That was a Grace Line. A ship by Grace Line, the Santa Rosa. And it was a troop ship.

I: So this is not a Liberty Ship.

N: No. This is a big luxury liner. On these luxury liners, the crews, the navy gun crews, we ate in the main dining room. We had crystal chandeliers. Three, 3 course meals.

I: That was pretty high living.

N: And the soldiers, they were all out on deck, lined up. They lined up at 5 o'clock in the morning for their breakfast. And as soon as they got out of that line, they would get in another line for their lunch. They got about 2 meals a day, really. Breakfast and dinner.

I: But it was different for the gunner's mates?

N: The gunners.

I: And by that time you were a gunner instead of a gunner's mate?

N: A gunner is a gunner. I was a gunner's mate.

I: So the gunners had it better than the troops you were transporting?

N: Oh, yes. In fact, every now and then, we would pick up a couple soldiers and bring them down with us. They couldn't believe it. (laughs) I had a pretty good deal, most of the time.

I: And that was towards the end of the war that you got on that ship?

N: The Santa Rosa, yes. And it was the one that we brought back wounded soldiers. We took fresh ones over and brought back wounded ones out of La Havre, France.

I: And that is the one that Lou Ann said was the Purple Heart ship.

N: Yes. We had those soldiers. lying down there below decks. And those bunks are right next to each other. Lined up.

There were probably 8 or 9000 guys on that ship. They had their arms off, and their legs off. It smelled bad down there.

I: Were there medical personnel down there to take care of them?

N: Oh, yes. There were medical personnel on there.

I: How long a trip was it from France?

N: I think about 7 days.

I: So, these people had to do 7 days at sea.

N: It took about 7 days. (Wife says, "They gave your ship a hero's welcome, though.")

N: Oh, yes.

I: And that was in New York, the welcome?

N: In Brooklyn.

But I had my own cabin, my own room. It was right under the 5 inch 38. A bad place to be.

I: That was a gun, right?

N: Yes.

I: Did the guns fire on the Santa Rosa? I mean did you have to fire the guns when you were on the Santa Rosa?

N: No. On those troop ships we don't go towards where the fight is at. We run.

I: Yes. Taking the troops home.

N: We don't fight. Unless we are cornered or something.

I: The object was to get the troops to land.

N: That's right. If there was a fight over here we went way around it.

I: Did the troop ships travel alone?

N: Some of them. We traveled alone quite a bit. We would have convoy out so many miles, and then we would take off from them. We would leave that convoy behind in 2 hours.

You couldn't see them.

I: You were faster? The troop ships were faster?

N: Yes. See the Queen Mary, she ran alone all the time. She is not in service anymore, but she was then. And she run by herself all the time. She never run in convoy.

I: What was it like being at sea? Did you like it?

N: Oh, yes. I enjoyed it.

I: What did you like about it?

N: Oh, I don't know. You could see for so far. You could see forever, it seemed like.

I: Did you see anything unusual, while you were out at sea on the ship?

N: What do you mean unusual?

I: I don't know. I imagine, since I've never been I just can imagine--porpoises jumping, or whales.

N: Oh, yes. We saw porpoises quite a bit. And they would just run along in the wake of the ship. Along the side, and just keep up with you.

I: You liked to fish so well when you were a kid, did you fish off of the ship?

N: Yes. In La Havre, I believe it was, we fished off the back of the ship, off the fan tail. We caught Red Snappers.

I: Those are supposed to be good eating. Did you get your cook to cook them up?

N: Yes, we got them all. And the cook he came out there and gathered them all up and cleaned them, and we had fish for supper.

I: I asked Lou Ann about reflecting now about growing up and not having as much, at least now knowing that you didn't have as much--about going through a war. And you participated in a war, actually. Do you feel that it has had any effect on the way you have lived the rest of your life?

N: I don't think the war has had any effect on me, bad or any other way. I mean, it is just part of--I don't think it had any effect on me one way or the other. The only thing that

I see is, youth now today. They have so hard a time, having fun. We were talking today, we made our own fun. I think they really have grown to miss a lot.

I: What do you think caused that?

N: I think, the love of money.

I: You think the love of money caused them to. . .

N: I think that is what is happened to most of them today, Don't you?

I: I don't know.

N: I mean, they have got to have a dollar. We never had anything. If we had a 50 cent piece in our pocket we thought we were rich.

I: Do you think things will continue they way they are? Do you think we are going backwards, or forwards?

N: I think we are going backwards, really. I think we are digging our own grave, is what I think.

I: I was wondering because we seem to be kind of in a recession or a depression now. And I look around and I see so many people again o[illegible] of work, and not through their own choice. And I wondered if someone, like yourself, who lived through it the first time, when we went through the depression and then the recovery. Of course, you were pretty young. But I wondered if there were any similarities between what happened in the late 1920's and the early 1930's and what is going on now? Do you see similarities in that or not?

N: No. Not really. I think it has just been a gain, a steady gain.

I: Since the crash?

N: Yes. Steady gain. And probably the only thing that can bring it back where it is half way decent--$20,000 for an automobile that in 1976 I gave $6400. Why? How come it is so high?

I: I don't know. What do you think?

N: Where is it going to end? Maybe this Mexican free trade agreement [North American Free Trade Agreement]. Maybe that is the answer.

I: To high prices?

N: It might be. Because those Mexicans sure can't buy those cars.

I: No.

N: So, if they are going to sell them they are maybe going to get us down, level with the Mexicans. Then we can start all over again.

I: So, you think we are still gaining, but we might end up coming down, but not in the same way.

N: Yes. I think this Free Trade Agreement. The only thing it is going to do is bring everybody down to one level. Like the Mexicans will probably be making $6 an hour, but that is what we will be making, too. And then the guy is going to go back to selling his car for $6400. And if they could keep it that way, and everybody work we would be a lot better off than we are right now. Wouldn't you think so?

I: It sounds logical. I kind of got off the track of World War II by asking you a reflecting question.

N: Yes, we did. It is still a big world war.

I: Yes, it is. It is just not declared. Well, I am all out of questions. Do you have any other comments or things you would like to say?

N: No. Thank you, for the time.

I Thank you for letting me interview you.

(End of Tape 1 side B)

WILLIAM E. SIBURT INTERVIEW

WORD LIST

William Siburt
Ruth Siburt
North Edward Street
United State Navy
World War II
James E. Siburt
Martha Lucinda (Daniels) Siburt
Mahomet, Illinois
Decatur, Illinois
West Main Street
Latham, Illinois
Warrensburt, Illinois
Aunt Juanita
Jim (Siburt)
Marjie (Siburt)
Grandpa Daniels
Linxweiler Printing Company
South Park Street
Central Park
Sunnyside Road
Christmas
West Cushing Street
22 rifle
Uncle Pete
Fairview Park
Dreamland Lake
Stevens Creek
Bob
Lawfry
Rena
Lord
Railway Express Company
[Stephen] Decatur High School
President Franklin D. Roosevelt
Peoria, Illinois
NYA [National Youth Association]
Art Williams
Leturnal
Great Lakes Naval Training Station
Boy Scouts (of America)
New Orleans
Algiers
Armed Guard
Charleston, South Carolina
South Africa
Dakar

Brooklyn, New York
United States
James Parker
38 special revolvers
Spinka
Fort Niagara
Aruba
Curacao
Standard Oil Little Rock
Sicily
Beaumont, Texas
Russia
Liverpool, England
Glasgow, Scotland
Le Havre, France
Steam Ship Walter Kitty
Liberty Ship
Iran
Arabia
Little Rock
Santa Rosa
Grace LIne
Purple Hear Ship
Queen Mary
Red Snappers
Mexican
North American Free Trade Agreement