Mary Page Clardy was born on 21 January 1922 in Manley, Iowa, the oldest of five girls; her father worked for the railroad, and for that reason had moved from the South some years before Mary was born. Mary attended local schools, graduating from Manley High School in 1941. After school she worked from 1941-43 in Manley and nearby Mason City, doing domestic work, before deciding that greater opportunities awaited in the wartime economy in St. Paul, Minnesota.

In St. Paul, Mary lived with a family friend in the St. Anthony neighborhood, and quickly found an assembly line job at Griggs and Cooper, a St. Paul manufacturing firm. Over the next two years her sisters joined her in St. Paul, lured by the chance for a well-paying job. In 1944 Mary became pregnant, and returned briefly to her parents in Manley to have her child.

Following her son’s birth in July 1945, Mary returned to St. Paul; she worked at Acme Linen and later Anchor (Regents) hospital, in the dietary division. In 1947 she married James Clardy (d. 1987), and had two more children. Mary retired in 1984, but keeps busy with her family and her church, Pilgrim Baptist of St. Paul. At the time of this interview (December 2002) Mary lived in St. Paul.

Mary provides the perspective of a young African American woman from Iowa, drawn to St. Paul during the war years for the economic opportunities.

Mary Clardy passed away on 17 July 2010.
Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is the 27th of December 2002, and this our interview with Mary E. Clardy. And your maiden name was Page, is that right?

M: That’s right.

T: And we're in her apartment here in St. Paul. Now first of all, on the record, Mary, thanks very much for taking time this morning to speak with me.

M: You’re welcome.

T: Now we’ve talked for a little while here and here’s some of what I’ve learned. You were born on the 21st of January 1922 in the little town of Manley, Iowa, which is near Mason City. Your mom and dad were both from Arkansas, weren't they?

M: That’s right.

T: And they moved up there right after the turn of the century. Your dad worked on the railroad and your mom did domestic work on and off in the Manley area. You were the oldest of five girls.

M: That’s right.

T: And went to school in Manley there. A one building school, you said earlier, right?

M: Yes.

T: And that had all the grades you need I suppose.

M: One through twelve.

T: You finished high school there in 1941. What about after high school?

M: I worked in Mason City for a couple years.

T: How far was it from Mason City to Manley?

M: Nine miles.
T: So if you wanted you could go to work in Mason City during the day and come back.

M: I lived in Mason City with my aunt while I was working.

T: What kind of work did you do in Mason City?

M: Domestic work.

T: Were there other jobs available at that time?

M: No. No jobs available, other than that.

T: On one side as a historian I know that the war brought different kinds of opportunities, but I'm also wondering as an African-American in Iowa, did you notice that being African-American was a determining factor in being able to get jobs or not get jobs?

M: Yes, it was. There was a lot of... a lot of people did not hire blacks. That's one reason why we had to come up here [to St. Paul]. To get work. Because there was nothing else to do there. If you didn't want to do domestic work then you just had to move someplace else.

(1, A, 52)

T: When you were doing domestic work in Mason City was that mostly for white folks?

M: Yes.

T: How was the relationship between you as a black person working in someone's home and the white person you worked for?

M: It was very good, because the lady that I worked for really liked me. Therefore I had no problem working for her.

T: What prompted you really to leave Mason City? I mean packing up and moving away is still kind of difficult.

M: I just got tired of doing domestic work. I wanted to do something else and something that paid more money. Because at that time when I first started doing domestic work, we could only get what was it, five dollars an hour. (*unclear as to actual amount of pay*) It wasn't very much.
T: The money you earned as a domestic, was that enough to get your own apartment or to be out on your own?

M: No. I was still living at home with my mother and dad. In Mason City I lived with my aunt while I was working.

T: When you think about Iowa, Mason City or Manley, did you detect what you would consider racism there?

M: No. Because in Mason City they weren’t as prejudiced as they were in Manley.

T: And it’s only nine miles apart, too.

M: Yes.

T: What did you notice as far as the difference in those two places?

M: Let me see. I’m trying to think... There’s so many places that we couldn’t go in Manley.

T: Now is this the kind of discrimination that signs were posted that said “No Blacks,” or you just knew?

M: Oh, no. We just knew that. When we would go visiting in the South, like in Elderay, Arkansas where my folks lived, that’s when I knew that. They had signs on the water fountains and things. “Blacks” on one fountain, and “Whites” on the other.

T: Now that’s not something you saw in Manley, Iowa.

M: Oh, no.

T: But there was discrimination in Manley, Iowa.

M: Yes.

T: What kind of discrimination was it if there weren’t any signs out?

M: When we were going to school they... the blacks couldn’t, like we couldn’t play basketball on the basketball team. At least the blacks couldn’t. But that soon changed. When my oldest sister was going to school [also before 1945], she could play basketball.

T: And she was only two years younger than you, wasn’t she? Your oldest sister.

M: She was, was it two years? She finished high school in ‘44. I finished in ‘41.
T: Now when you came to St. Paul, 1943, to stay on that subject of discrimination, how would you compare St. Paul to Manley or Mason City, two places that you were familiar with?

M: St. Paul was altogether different.

T: In what ways?

M: Let me see. I’m trying to think. It was different.

T: You mentioned the kind of open discrimination in the South where you saw signs up and then you made a contrast to Manley, Iowa, where it was just kind of not spoken but understood. How does St. Paul fit in with those two categories?

M: St. Paul was just about the same. We just knew that there was a lot of places that really didn’t accept blacks.

T: So when you went looking for jobs did you have trouble because you were black or did you perceive you were having trouble because you were black?

M: Yes.

T: Did employers tell you that, or did they put it in some other way?

M: No. They didn’t tell you that, but you just knew that, when they said they didn’t need anybody… Some of the people would tell you, “I’m sorry, but we don’t hire blacks.”

T: So some people were honest.

M: Yes.

T: How did other people put it? If they weren’t honest with you…

M: They would just say, “We don’t have anything,” or, “We’ll call you,” or something like that.

T: But you perceived that the real reason wasn’t that they weren’t hiring.

M: Yes.

T: You did find a job, though, in St. Paul.

M: Oh, yes.
T: How much difficulty did you have actually finding a place to work?

M: I really didn’t have much of a difficulty, because there was a white man that was a very good friend of the lady that we roomed with. They called him and asked him if he could find a job for us. So he did. He found a job for us at Griggs and Cooper [in St. Paul].

T: Do you remember how long you were in St. Paul before you actually found a job?

M: Not very long.

T: So really the economy had picked up to the point where if you wanted a job you could find one.

M: Yes.

T: Can you describe on tape here the kind of work you were doing at Griggs and Cooper?

M: Yes. We did what do you call it... we were doing what they called working with boxes. Shipping things that were used for the Army, for soldiers. We had to make those cookies that they used for the fellows that were in the service. It was... what they called... I’m trying to think.

T: Was it just cookies or was it other things too?

M: No. It was other stuff too. We bagged candy, too, but that was for the stores that were selling candy.

T: I see. So Griggs and Cooper manufactured candy and cookies and things like this and then packaged them for different things. Some for retail in the markets and some for shipment to the Army and to other customers.

M: That’s right.

T: Now you were actually on an assembly line, kind of boxing and bagging?

M: Yes. An assembly line and we, I’m trying to think exactly what we had to do.

T: Let me ask you about the job here. When you were working and you looked around you were there mostly women there, mostly men working around you or a mix of both?

M: It was a mix of both.
T: And how about the people? Were they mostly whites, mostly blacks, or a mix?

M: They were mixed.

T: So really a mixed... in many ways, both gender and race, the people you saw working around you.

M: Yes.

T: Did you work full time there at that job?

M: Yes. Sometimes we worked eight, nine and ten hours.

T: So there was plenty of work to be had.

M: Yes.

T: If you think about how much you were paid, not the exact amount, but did you consider yourself to be well paid or okay or could be better?

M: I think we were well paid.

T: So the money you were making was enough to meet your rent expenses and other expenses, too.

M: Yes.

T: Let me back up just for a minute. Go back to 1941. The US got involved in the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941. In 1941, you had finished high school when the US got involved in the war.

M: That’s right.

T: I’m wondering if you remember what you were doing when you first heard the news about Pearl Harbor?

M: No. I sure don’t remember exactly what I was doing.

(1, A, 216)

T: The news came on the radio and in the papers within a matter of a day or two, saying that the US was at war. Do you remember how you reacted to that, finding out that the nation was suddenly at war and what that was going to mean?

M: I’m not sure exactly how I reacted to that.
T: This was December 1941, so you were just out of high school, and were living at home with your folks, or in Mason City. By the way, was your dad, was he called to service during the war?

M: No. He was too old to go into the service.

T: So there was no worry for either you or your mom or your sisters that your dad was going to be called. You had no brothers to worry about going in the service.

M: No, I didn't have any. But I had some cousins that were called to go into the service.

T: Were those cousins that were pretty close to you?

M: Yes.

T: How did you think about that? Of having people that you knew suddenly part of this war.

M: No. I really didn’t think about it too much because they went into the service, and they would always write us letters telling us about some of the things that were happening.

T: Do you remember getting some of those letters yourself?

M: Yes.

T: Did you write back?

M: Yes. I wrote back to them.

T: Mary, from 1941 to 1943 you were what, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one years old, and working in Manley and Mason City. Did you work pretty much for the same family the whole time in domestic work?

M: Yes.

T: Did you think about maybe getting in a different kind of job? Maybe there were other jobs out there or you were okay with what you were doing?

M: I was okay with that, because we didn’t have any choice.

T: Did you think that a move to St. Paul, Minnesota, would bring you more choices for jobs and your own life?

M: Yes. I knew that.
T: When you got to St. Paul was that the way it really was? Did you have more options? Did you feel yourself to be in a more open community?

M: Yes, I did.

T: What did you like or did you find most attractive about St. Paul once you got there in 1943?

M: I don't know what I found attractive about it.

T: St. Paul is bigger than Mason City and surely bigger than Manley. Did you like the feel of a big city?

M: Yes, I did. It was just nice being in a big city and working and being able to do whatever I wanted to do with the amount of money that we were making.

Pause in interview. Next section starts at counter 280.

T: This is part two of our interview with Mary Clardy. Today is the 6th of January 2003. Well, back on the record again Mary. Last time we talked about kind of graduating from high school and the first couple years you were in Mason City and Manley, Iowa, from 1941 to 1943. Then you moved here to St. Paul. You talked a bit about your job at the Griggs and Cooper Company, a manufacturer of candy and cookies and things like that, where you were doing assembly line work essentially bagging candy and other assorted things.

M: That's right. And at Griggs and Cooper there was a lot of, how should I say it, doing things for the Army. There were military contracts. C rations and K rations.

T: So this was partly military contract work. Now when you came to St. Paul, you lived in a rented place up in the St. Anthony neighborhood?

M: Yes.

T: I think you said earlier there were five girls together in this house.

M: Five girls. It was a private house. In fact it was a duplex, and we lived upstairs. We had two bedrooms. Anyway it was real nice. All five girls living together.

T: Did you know some of these girls before you moved in this house?

M: I knew the lady that owned the house. She was an acquaintance. They had a grocery store. They owned a grocery store, and she was also a beautician.

T: How did you know her?
M: I knew her through my aunt that we stayed with when we moved to St. Paul.

T: I see. She was a contact you met through your aunt when you first got here.

M: Yes.

T: Now the other girls that you were living with in this house, were they people that you selected as roommates or you just kind of were there and they were there too?

M: They were friends of my aunt’s that was living in the house also. She wanted us to come and stay with her.

T: The people who were living there, all about the same age as you?

M: No. They were older.

T: So you were the youngest person staying there?

M: My sisters and I were the youngest.

T: So your sisters were here in St. Paul in this house in St. Anthony too?

M: Yes. All five of us girls.

T: So they were all... it was all four of your sisters?

M: Yes.

T: Now I see. How is it that your sisters all came at the same time?

M: I graduated in ‘41. In ‘42... ‘43 my sister next to me graduated, and that’s when we got the call to come to St. Paul.

T: And so all of you were up here.

M: That’s right.

T: But not your folks.

M: Oh, no. They still lived in Manley.

T: Now you had some sisters who were younger here at this time, right?
M: That’s right. But I was the oldest.

T: What were the ages of these sisters that were up here now? They were still going to school were they, some of them?

M: No.

T: So the five of you were up here and your folks were still in Iowa. Now as the oldest in a sense were you, did you feel yourself to be in charge of the household there?

M: Yes. Sort of.

T: What kind of responsibilities did you have in that situation?

M: I sort of kept my younger sisters in order.

T: You’re smiling as you say that, Miss Clardy. What does that mean when you say you had to keep them in order?

M: I was trying to figure out how I should explain it. *(laughs)* Anyway, we all lived together in the same house and they usually, if there was something they wanted to do, they would always talk it over with me and see what I thought about it.

T: Boy, that’s a lot of responsibility.

M: Yes.

T: In the house here, who was responsible for shopping and the cooking and the kind of housework?

M: All five of us.

T: You made a point of splitting the work up?

M: Oh, yes. Most of the cooking was done by my twin sisters and me.

T: You had a twin sister?

M: We had a set of twin sisters [in the family].

T: Do you have a twin yourself?

M: No.

T: So there’s you as the oldest, and then some twins after you.
M: No. There’s another one after me, and then the twins, and then the one that you met earlier here is the youngest one.

T: And you’re all relatively close in age I think you said, too.

M: Yes. About one or two years apart.

T: So your youngest sister wasn’t really a young person.

M: No.

T: The shopping, Mary, were you aware of how much money the household had, and how much could be spent and stuff like this?

M: We were all working at the same place, at Griggs and Cooper.

T: No kidding. So all together you're bringing in five paychecks?

M: Yes. Each one of us had our own paycheck.

T: Would you say there was enough money around for the household?

M: Oh, yes. Because we would always send my mom and dad money to help them out.

T: So you were generating extra cash in the household here that went back to your folks.

M: Yes.

T: Did your folks or your mom consider moving to St. Paul with you girls?

M: No. She and my dad stayed at their home in Manley, Iowa. Because dad had his job down there on the railroad.

T: So he wasn’t going to move.

M: Oh, no.

T: And your mom was going to stay with him.

M: Oh, yes.
T: One of the things I wanted to ask about, when it comes to doing cooking and shopping, what kind of encounters did you have with ration coupons or ration books, these kinds of things for certain products?

M: When we went shopping, we would all go together.

T: Did you have ration books with stamps for certain products?

M: We had... I’m trying to think... Yes, we did have ration books. We had to, we would always split up what we needed, because at that time sugar was rationed. And meat was rationed. And we had, we would always kind of split it up to where, whatever we needed, we had enough to last.

T: With doing the cooking, did you girls cook at home every day to take meals with you, or did you eat together? How did you work that?

M: Yes. We ate together. We would cook. Maybe we would cook and have enough food to last for two or three days.

**End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 385.**

T: When you went to work, did you all work the same shift do you recall, or were there different shifts?

M: No. We all worked the same shift.

T: Do you remember what time you went to work and what time you finished?

M: Let me see. I’m trying to think. What time did we have to be at work... We went in the morning. We usually worked ten or twelve hours.

T: So there was overtime work, or more than eight hours of work?

M: Yes.

T: Was that overtime work optional, or was it expected of you as the worker?

M: No, I think that was expected.

T: So they needed people to work more than eight hours.

M: Yes.

T: Do you recall getting extra pay for those overtime hours?

M: Oh, yes. We were really paid good for the work that we did.
T: What I hear you saying is that this move to St. Paul for you five girls was economically worthwhile.

M: Oh, yes. *(emphatically)*

T: Enough so that you could pay your rent, buy foodstuffs, keep your household, and send money back to your folks in Iowa every month.

M: That’s right.

**(1, B, 414)**

T: Opportunities opened up by the war economy.

M: Oh, yes.

T: Now did any one of you five girls switch jobs while you were here in St. Paul?

M: Yes. I worked... in 1945 my son was born, and I had gone home for [having the baby]. I was home until I was able to come back.

T: So your son was still pretty young when you left him with your folks in Iowa.

M: Yes.

T: Now the other four sisters stayed up in St. Paul and kept the house?

M: Yes.

T: So you could move right back to the house again.

M: Yes.

T: You left to go down... now, was your son born in Iowa?

M: Yes. He was born in Mason City.

T: So you were still pregnant when you went down to Iowa. You had your son in Mason City, and came back then when he was really young.

M: Yes.

T: When you left to go down to Iowa, did you leave the job at Griggs and Cooper?

M: Yes.
T: And when you came back to St. Paul did you pick up that job at Griggs and Cooper again?

M: Yes, I did.

T: So that job was waiting for you when you returned. You say you later moved to Acme Linen in St. Paul, but that was some time later.

M: Yes.

T: Let me move to a slightly connected topic here, and that is being a young person in St. Paul with your sisters. I mean, your parents were back in Iowa now. I'm wondering, when you weren't working, this is evenings or maybe weekends, what different activities, what kind of social life did you have?

M: Church. We all belonged to the same church, Pilgrim Baptist Church [here in St. Paul]. In fact we all, my sisters and I, joined in 1943.

T: Right when you got here. Did you make it a point when you first got to St. Paul to try to find a church for yourself? Was that an important thing for you?

M: Yes, but we didn't have to try to find a church because the people that we were living with when we first came to St. Paul belonged to that church, to Pilgrim Baptist.

M: Yes. And so they wanted us to join their church, so that's what we did. My sister and I became ushers. At Pilgrim, in 1943.

T: What did you like about Pilgrim Baptist when you first went there?

M: I liked the activities, and we belonged to the usher board. It was just, it was nice belonging to it, belonging to that church. The minister was nice.

T: Did it help make the move to St. Paul, the transition to a new place, easier?

M: Oh, yes. Because, see, in Mason City, Iowa, or in Iowa there was really nothing to do.

T: Social life, you mean.

M: That's right.

T: I think you mentioned earlier that the black community in Mason City was much smaller than that in St. Paul.

M: Oh, yes.
T: In the black community in St. Paul was it easier for you as a young black woman to meet men, for example?

M: Yes, it was easier. Such as it was.

T: Did you find it, or rather, was it possible to meet men through your church? Young men that you wanted to maybe go out with?

M: Yes. That was the main thing, the men that belonged to our church. It was… and on our usher board. There were young men. It made it nice all the way around.

T: Comfortable place to be, and a good way to meet people.

M: Yes.

T: Did all your sisters go to the church as well?

M: Oh, yes. In fact all five of us were ushers.

T: So really it became your home, for all five of you.

M: Yes.

(1, B, 501)

T: On kind of a connected note, how many of your sisters, your four sisters, stayed in St. Paul permanently?

M: All of us.

T: All of you stayed here. Did your folks ever move here, your mom or dad?

M: Oh, no.

T: So mom and dad stayed in Iowa, and the five of you stayed up here.

M: Yes. In fact, they used to drive up here quite a bit.

T: But they never moved. Even when they retired they didn’t really think of moving up here?

M: Oh, no.

T: Your folks, did they like it when they came to St. Paul? Was it a good place?
M: Yes, they did. Because they would always go to church with us and go to activities and things like that with us. We were a very close family.

T: And I had to look at the map when I got home. Mason City and St. Paul aren’t that far apart.

M: No. A couple of hours. In fact, we used to ride the train a lot because my dad worked on the railroad. And so we would get passes to ride the train.

T: Do you remember riding the trains... really those years we are talking about when you moved there, 1943, 1944, 1945? Were those trains pretty crowded?

M: Sometimes, yes.

T: But it was still the cheapest way for you to get back and forth especially with the pass.

M: Yes. If we didn’t... nobody had a car. Then going by train was the cheapest way to go. It was very reasonable to ride the train.

T: So really that was the way, that or the bus I suppose.

M: Yes.

T: And with the pass I guess the bus was more expensive than the train.

M: The bus wasn’t more expensive, but the train was cheaper because we had a pass and we could ride for nothing.

T: That made it cheaper or free.

M: Yes.

T: Back to your church. What different activities did your church have for young people at that time? Social activities.

M: I’m trying to think what activities did we have? Right now I can’t think.

T: But there were definitely things for you, ways to meet other young people.

M: Oh, yes.

T: It sounds like the church really became a hub of your life on Sunday morning and for other activities as well and really made you feel comfortable in St. Paul.

M: Yes.
T: If you think about church services, one thing I wanted to ask was if the war was something that you noticed in church. This could be the message on Sunday morning, mentioning the war or patriotic themes, or whether you saw young men in uniform or whether there were funerals at your church for servicemen. For example, did the minister ever mention the war, or talk about patriotism, these kinds of things?

M: Oh, yes. He preached on... quite often. It was mentioned quite often. We had a lot of young fellows that were in the service.

T: From your congregation.

M: Yes.

T: Were they prayed for regularly?

M: Oh, yes.

T: One other thing I had mentioned there was funerals. Were there ever funerals, that you recall, for young men who may have been killed while they were in service?

M: I'm sure there was. If there was funerals they just had funerals just like they do any other time.

T: It wouldn't have been a special thing.

M: No.

T: Your son, your first son, was born in July 1945. You weren't married at that time, is that right?

M: No.

T: Being a single woman and being pregnant, I'm wondering how people may have treated you at work, or how they acted toward you at work knowing that you weren't married but you were still pregnant? I'm wondering how people treated you.

M: It was accepted very well.

T: Did you continue to work the same number of hours that you had before?

M: Yes.

T: What kind of difficulties did you face? Being pregnant can be a hard thing.
M: I really didn’t face any difficulties.

T: Being on your feet or did you feel more tired at any time or those kinds of things?

M: No, not really.

T: It sounds like you had a pretty easy time then.

M: Yes. Because I had a lot of sisters that helped me.

T: Did they start to pull more of the load around the house as far as the cooking and cleaning and the shopping, that kind of stuff?

M: No, not really. I was able to do whatever I needed to do.

T: What made you decide to then go to Iowa to have your baby in 1945?

M: Because that’s what my mother wanted me to do. She wanted me to come home and stay until the time to have the baby.

T: What was she telling you? What arguments was she making to try to convince you to come down there?

M: She really didn’t make any arguments at all, because it would have been cheaper for me to go there and have my baby than it would have been to stay here.

T: How long... how many months were you in Iowa before your baby was actually born in July of 1945?

M: I’m trying to think. When did I go there? I’m not exactly what month it was.

T: You worked for a while here at Griggs and Cooper while you were pregnant, you said, so it was some months there before he was born. Was it a hard decision to leave your son there with your folks and come back to St. Paul?

M: No. It wasn’t, because that’s what they wanted me to do.

T: Your mom and dad?

M: Yes.

T: Was that what you wanted as well, or did they kind of talk you into it?
M: No, that’s what I wanted, too.

T: You were anxious to come back here to St. Paul, though.

M: Yes. Because I knew if I came back here and went back to work, I could send them money to take care of my son.

T: So really the economic part of it came into play again, didn’t it? There were just better opportunities here in St. Paul, weren’t there?

M: That’s right.

T: Let me move now. In 1945, that’s the year that the war ended. It was also in 1945, in April, that President Franklin Roosevelt died.

M: Oh, yes.

T: Now do you remember, were you in St. Paul or were you back in Iowa already when he died? Do you remember?

M: I think I was in Iowa.

T: Mary, do you remember how you reacted to hearing the news that President Roosevelt had died?

M: No, I don’t remember how I reacted. I don’t know. Absolutely do not know exactly how I reacted.

T: Now in 1944, that was the last time President Roosevelt was re-elected, you were old enough to vote in that. I’m wondering, do you remember voting in 1944 in the presidential election?

M: Yes. I remember voting, and I’m sure I voted for President Roosevelt.

T: What did you find appealing about President Roosevelt?

M: For one thing he was good to the poor people, and he brought about so many different things that the poor people could take advantage of. They had social programs, to be sure.

T: Were your folks upset at all that you recall about the president dying?

M: No, not really. You know, they weren’t upset, but there’s nothing that you can do about that.
T: The next month, in May 1945, the war against Germany ended. It sounds like you were in Iowa at that time. And in August of 1945, it sounds like about a month after your baby was born, the war against Japan ended. I’m wondering what you remember about either one of those, the end of the war against Germany in May or the end of the war against Japan, just a month after your baby was born.

M: Not really too much.

T: Do you remember any kind of a reaction or any kind of celebrations in Manley or Mason City, or the end of the war there against Germany or Japan?

M: No, I really don’t.

T: How about your folks or people in your neighborhood there in Manley? Do you remember them saying anything or doing anything around the time the war ended there? Something that people were talking about?

M: I don’t remember.

(1, B, 670)

T: You were a new mother by that time anyway. You had other things to think about, I suppose.

M: Yes.

T: One of the reasons that the war against Japan ended so quickly in August of 1945 was the US Government’s decision to use atomic weapons against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August. What did you know about that? How aware were you about this weapon or these atomic bombs at the time?

M: Not very much.

T: Do you remember that being in the papers at all or on the radio that those weapons had been used?

M: I’m sure it was on the radio and in the papers too, but I just don’t remember a lot of that stuff.

T: It sounds like you, while you were aware that it was there, that it was happening, it didn’t impact you personally in a big way at all.

M: No.

T: And what I hear you saying is, your concerns were your job for a while, or your new baby and your family. Things like that.

Oral History Project: WWII Years, 1941-1946 – Mary Clardy
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M: That’s right.

T: You stayed in Iowa for just a little bit of time, but by the end of 1945, before your son was too old, you were back working in St. Paul.

M: Yes.

T: Was your job or St. Paul any different when you went back than when you had left?

M: No. There wasn't a lot of difference.

T: You went back to the same job, didn’t you?

M: Yes.

T: Doing pretty much the same thing?

M: Yes. We were working long hours because they needed the help, especially with the war going on. In 1945 after the war ended we still had to work long hours.

T: So the end of the war didn’t mean necessarily the end of the kind of upswing, the economic upswing. This company was still looking for people and paying decent wages.

M: Yes.

T: Now you were married 1947 I think you said, right?

M: Yes.

T: And that was James Clardy?

M: Yes.

T: And you were married in St. Paul?

M: Yes I was.

T: Remind me, was James from St. Paul?

M: No. He was from Loxburg, Arkansas. He came up here to get a job and to be with some of his relatives.
T: So he’s in some ways like you—his family was from outside this area, and up here there was economic opportunity.

M: Yes. He worked at the Union Depot as a Redcap. A friend of mine introduced me to him and from there we started dating, and as far as I can remember we... it was quite a while after that that we got married.

T: When did you first meet him? Was it pretty soon after you got to St. Paul?

M: No, not right away.

T: So you were here for a while.

M: Yes.

T: And you were married in St. Paul in 1947. Now husband James, was he a veteran?

M: No.

T: And was he about the same age as you?

M: No. He was about five years older than me.

T: Was he here in St. Paul before you?

M: Yes, he was. Let’s see, I came here in ’43 and I’m trying to think. What year did he come here? I can’t remember exactly what year.

T: It was before you, though, so he was here and settled with relatives.

M: Yes.

T: When did you move out of that house that you were sharing with your sisters?

M: When I got married I was renting from some people on Iglehart, here in St. Paul.

T: So you had moved from the St. Anthony house with your sisters.

M: Yes.

T: The house on Iglehart, was that with some of your sisters too, or not?

M: I’m trying to think. The house on Iglehart, I moved there... You know, I can’t even remember exactly when that was.
T: Was that, if you can place it this way, did you move to Iglehart after you got back from living in Iowa? From having the baby?

M: Oh, yes. This was after.

T: So when you first came back from Iowa, did you move back to that house with your sisters?

M: Let me see...

T: So then when you came back in mid-late ‘45 and you came back from having your baby in Iowa you did come back to the house on St. Anthony but then you moved to this also rental property on Iglehart?

M: Yes.

T: Did you rent that place by yourself or with your sisters or with someone else?

M: Let me see. I rented that house from, you know what, that was my husband’s house. That was a different man. I was married to a man named Price at that time.

T: The last question I wanted to ask really was about the war years as a whole for you, from Iowa and St. Paul. It was this period until 1945 or 1946. Do you feel that period was economically and maybe in other ways good for you? A good number of years?

M: Yes. I think so.

T: It sounds like it brought opportunities for you. Certainly it was getting jobs and with earning money that it was much different than it would have been without the war years there.

M: Oh, yes.

T: Okay. I think that’s the last question we had was to clear that up. Let me on record thank you very much for our two days of talking. I really enjoyed this very much.

M: Well I hope that it was really what you wanted because there’s so many things that I have really forgotten.

T: Thanks for your time today, Mary.

END OF INTERVIEW