

Interviewee: Aline MacNeven

Interviewer: Dan Borkenhagen

Date: 21 November 2001

Location: the MacNeven home in Roseville, MN

Transcribed by: Dan Borkenhagen, March 2002

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, July 2002

Aline was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota, on 20 June 1922, one of six children. She grew up on the family farm, which was located approximately ten miles of East Grand Forks, Minnesota.

In May 1941, Aline relocated to Washington, D.C. She spent the war years of 1941-45 working as a civilian with the War Department (currently known as the Department of Defense). Aline worked as a stenographer, helping to keep track of transport ships that travelled all over the world. Much of the work involved secret and confidential information. Aline talks of that, and recounts experiences of living and working in the nation's capital during wartime.

In 1945, Aline returned to Minnesota and completed training as a nurse. She worked for more than 40 years in the nursing profession. Aline was married in 1950 (husband: Leonard "Scotty" MacNeven), and had two one child, John. At the time of this interview, Aline lived in Roseville, Minnesota.

Aline MacNeven died 13 Feb 2015 in Roseville, Minnesota.

Interview key:

A = Aline MacNeven

D = Dan Borkenhagen

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A.

D: Today is November 21st, 2001, and this is an interview with Aline MacNeven. Thank you very much, Aline, for agreeing to do this with me. The first questions I'm going to ask you are just some basic biographical things, so that we can get a picture of your life. After that we'll go back into the war years with a little more depth.

A: Alright.

D: First, where were you born and when?

A: I was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota, on June 20th, 1922.

D: Okay, and who were your parents?

A: John and Catherine Geesy. We lived in East Grand Forks, Minnesota.

D: Did you have any siblings?

A: I have two brothers and three sisters.

D: Did you live in Grand Forks through high school?

A: We lived in East Grand Forks on a farm, ten miles from East Grand Forks. Grand Forks is just across the Red River from East Grand Forks.

D: Your family lived on a farm, you said?

A: We lived on a farm and we worked hard! *(laughs)*

D: And you lived there until when then?

A: I lived there until I went to Washington, D.C.

D: And what year did you go to Washington, D.C.?

A: In 1941. May of 1941.

D: So you spent your war years in Washington, D.C. with the Department of Defense, correct?

A: No, the War Department.

D: The War Department, excuse me. Briefly, after you got done there, I'm just going to skip ahead a little bit, what did you do after you came back from D.C., in 1945?

A: When I was in D.C. I had decided I wanted to go into nurses training. So at that time I came back home because I thought, I'd like to be a little closer to home and I won't have any money for a while, to travel back and forth. So I came back home and entered a training school in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Anker Hospital School of Nursing, which is no longer here.

D: So was that a two year program?

A: Three years.

D: So you were a nurse then?

A: Then you were an RN [registered nurse], and you took exams and you passed exams, and then you got your RN.

D: So how long did you work as a nurse?

A: For 49 years.

D: So up until retirement actually?

A: Right.

D: And what year did you retire then?

A: In 1984, but that was from full-time nursing. Then I worked ten years part-time nursing and home care with Christian Homes of Minnesota. I worked with them until 1994. Then I decided, gee, I am retired, it's time I get some time off. *(laughs)*

D: When you were married?

A: I was married in 1950, to Scotty, or his name was Leonard MacNeven.

D: And you two had children?

A: We had one boy, John.

D: And what do you do now to keep yourself busy?

A: Well, after I retired, I thought I was through working, but I ended up babysitting my two grandkids. We bought a house together, it's two separate houses; we both have private quarters. I'm downstairs and they're upstairs. They're completely separate. It turned out they needed a babysitter and, of course, grandma was handy. So I babysat, and I'm still working at that. Don't have to do it so much because the children are older, but I still get them up in the morning and see that they get on the bus.

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D: Still some grandmother care to be given, eh? That should do for the general information. I'm going to jump back to the war years now. What time did you leave to head out to Washington?

A: We left in May of 1941.

D: So this was even before December 7th, before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Why did you decide to go to Washington? How did you get this job, what was that situation?

A: Well, a girlfriend and I were looking for work. We were through with high school, and in fact we'd gone to business college for a year, but still there was no work. So her mother said to us, "Civil Service is hiring—why don't you two go to Crookston [Minnesota] and take the civil service test?" So we found out about that, and we did. My girlfriend got called first, and the job was in Washington, D.C., and I got called about a week or so later. So she was already there, so I thought, well, I'll go too. It was okay, because we were friends from high school. So then I went there in May of 1941.

D: And you worked for the War Department?

A: Yes, the quartermaster corps.

D: What job did they hire you for?

A: It was office, office work. Stenographer I guess was the title, and we worked in the big city building in Washington, D.C. They were building the Pentagon, which was not finished yet at that time. And when they finished that Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, they moved us over there, to the Pentagon.

D: So for almost six months you worked before the war had even begun. What was the level of activity around there? Was it still pretty busy?

A: I guess so. We were young and I guess we didn't pay that much attention to all that.

D: Where were you and what were you doing on December 7th, 1941?

A: It was on a Sunday, and Gruff [nickname of friend and roommate] and I were home, and listening to the radio and we heard that news. It's hard to believe, but that's what happened.

D: So you were at your apartment then?

A: Yes.

D: How did you react right away, do you remember what you first were thinking?

A: I don't really remember, except it was rather scary. You know, here we are and are we safe here in the nation's capital? I remember just when they started doing blackouts, we had to keep sheets drawn all the time at nighttime. I remember that.

D: That happened soon thereafter?

A: Yes, they felt that Washington, D.C. was a very likely target for more trouble.

D: Do you remember how anyone around you reacted at that time? Obviously you wouldn't have been with your parents, but do you remember how your friends reacted, or people in the War Department, for that matter?

A: Well, we had all these restrictions that they came out with. Stamps for to get gas, and stamps for to buy meat, I think. I remember there was a lot of restrictions on your food and gas. Gas didn't matter to us because we didn't have a car; we rode the bus.

D: You don't remember any personal reactions then really so much, as general things that started happening?

A: Yes.

D: What did you parents say when they found out that December 7th comes and their daughter is out in Washington, D.C.? Do you remember that?

A: I don't remember, because we corresponded by letter. I don't really remember what their reaction was at all.

D: Okay. Well, you mentioned rationing in a number of ways, you said meat and sugar and those kinds of things.

A: Yes, sugar was rationed.

D: Do you remember any other specific restrictions on activity that happened right after that time?

A: I don't remember activity because, I don't know, we didn't do that much. We went to work and then came home. I used to go roller-skating and go to church. And we went to young people's group, the Walther League [a Lutheran Church Missouri Synod youth organization], we went to that.

D: Do you remember the city of Washington, did things get tighter? Did security get tighter at all around there? There were blackouts then, but was there any other kinds of things that you noticed after 7 December?

A: I don't remember too much except we had the blackouts.

D: Were they pretty strict about those blackouts?

A: Well, we followed them.

D: So you didn't find out?

A: *(laughs)* Right!

D: During the war then, you said you worked in the War Department, you hung out with your girlfriends, went to Walther League. Were there any other activities that you were active in at that time?

A: Well, when you're in D.C., you have a lot of sightseeing to do. So we did that on weekend, because we were off on the weekend. And then we would go on day tours, the bus company sponsored day tours. I remember we went on those, many of those.

D: What kind of things did you get to see?

A: We went to see the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia on one of them. We went to Richmond Virginia, I believe that was the Lucky Strike [cigarette] factory. I don't know why we went there, because neither of us smoked. I remember that one. We went on picnics and we went to beaches and that. I went to Virginia Beach, and that was on a cruise ship we went there. I remember the first time I got sunburned so bad I burned and blistered.

D: With your job then, could you describe it? You said you were a stenographer. Could you describe exactly what you'd do for your job?

A: It was typing. We kept track of all the transports, the ships, the servicemen, all over the world. This was all secret and confidential information, and our papers had to be stamped accordingly.

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D: Did you have to go through some clearances to be able to handle these papers?

A: We did when we started to work there, but I don't remember how strict it was.

D: What was it like walking into the War Department building? Were there security guards out there and around there?

A: I don't really remember that. That was fifty years ago! I know we had to wear our nametag, I remember that. We always had to have that.

D: At the War Department, what kind of people did you deal with? Was it servicemen at all?

A: Servicemen and civilians. There were both, Army personnel. Lieutenants, and our boss was a captain. Our boss in the office was a captain. I think he had just gotten promoted. He had been a first lieutenant, and then he got promoted to captain. Then there were some generals.

D: Did you have some women officers?

A: No, not that I remembered.

D: You mentioned a couple of different activities that you were involved with during the war. You mentioned both church and Walther League, and also social activities. So I thought we might look at some of those.

A: Well ice skating too, don't forget that.

D: Now with these social activities, you went ice skating, you went roller skating, did you hit the town at night for those things, or where did you go to do those?

A: Yes, it had to be the evening because we worked in the daytime. Our hours were daytime hours, so this had to be at nighttime.

D: And you went into D.C. to do this type of stuff?

A: We lived in D.C.

D: And so you took the bus downtown, or did you live downtown?

A: We lived out. We had to find, I don't remember where we roller-skated, but it was an auditorium. And we went ice skating, in the wintertime there's a reflection pool. Have you ever been to D.C.?

D: No, I've never been there.

A: Okay, well, between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, they have a reflection pool. They often show it on the TV when there's activities there. And the crowds of people that are there. All you can see is people, people. We used to go ice-skating on that reflection pool, between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. And I think of that when I see it on TV, and I think, "Gee, I went ice skating there." *(laughs)*

D: That was you fifty years ago, huh?

A: Over fifty years ago. I don't know if they still skate there now but they show it when there's crowds of people. We used to go by the White House on the bus to go to work. We were going to go the White House but we didn't get there, then they put it off limits. Then there were no visitors, on account of the war.

D: When did that happen, do you remember? Was it right after December 7th that they put that off limits?

A: Yes.

D: And so you missed a chance to visit?

A: Yes, missed out on a visit to the White House.

D: What was the social life like in Washington, D.C.? You mentioned there were a lot of servicemen around, and then there's ladies like you coming into town. What was it like?

A: Somewhere along the line, I participated in the United Service Organization, if you've heard of that, the USO. We would, what I remember, we treated the boys to coffee and pop and whatever, like little snacks. That I remember.

D: What did you do? What was your role within the USO?

A: To help with the serving of that.

D: What was it at specific social functions that you did that, or was it just like places that were open?

A: There was, I don't remember what the name of the place was, but this was a, I guess it was just designated as the USO quarters. And then we took the bus down there, to get there. I don't remember if there was dancing or not at this one; I think it was just, a social thing.

D: So this was just a center that was open throughout the day for soldiers to come in?

A: I don't know if it was daytime or what, it seems like I went after work, if I remember right. Maybe it was open in the daytime too, I'm sure it was, but I was working in the daytime so I didn't go then. The only time I could help out was after work.

D: Did you do that pretty regularly throughout your time in Washington?

A: Yes, I think so.

D: What was it like being around the soldiers?

A: Well, you visited with them, you talked and that.

D: Were a lot of them coming through there before they were heading out or were most of them stationed around Washington?

A: Some of them were stationed around D.C. There was Walther Reed hospital located there in Washington, too. We used to go out there to visit the servicemen actually. I forgot about that one. Yes, we used to go and visit, and that had to be on a Saturday or a Sunday.

D: Was this as part of the USO then that you went out there to visit?

A: I don't remember if we just did that on word of mouth from some of the people we worked with. They wanted... the servicemen enjoyed visits. *(pauses three seconds)* I don't remember what kind of injuries they had, but they would enjoy a visit. So we did that.

D: Just what made you think about doing things like that?

A: Well, word of mouth from your friends. And then, I was volunteering with things we did for the service. But I don't remember what we did, if we made things or what. But I did that, too, that was at night also. We had to go down, this place where we went, where the quarters were, it was just across the street from the White House. The place where we had to go to do our volunteering. But what we did, I don't know what we did! *(laughs)* Well, it was something for the service.

D: So you did a bunch of different volunteer activities. What made you want to do those kinds of things?

A: Well, your friends and your patriotism.

D: So it was kind of a patriotic kind of thing.

A: Well, yes.

D: Do you think you felt more patriotic at this time than you had before the war?

A: I would say so. Whatever you could do to help you did, that was kind of your duty.

D: Do you think that came more in place after December 7th, or when you went to Washington, D.C.?

A: I think it was after that.

D: That really kind of inspired you then, do you think?

A: I think so.

D: You also mentioned a couple of church type things. You mentioned you went to church actively during that time.

A: We went to, I believe it was Christ Lutheran Church, and they had a young people's Walther League. I joined that.

D: What was it like being part of Walther League at that time, did you notice any changes due to the war?

A: Not really.

D: What kind of activities did you do?

A: We had meetings and we'd go on outings, picnics and tours, day tours we'd go on.

D: Were there ever any service activities for Walther League or for your church even in general, rolling bandages or that type of thing that you recall?

A: There could have been, but I don't remember doing that myself. I did this other volunteering, which was kind of downtown in D.C. So if they did, they might have, but I don't remember doing that.

D: When there were meetings, do you think any of the messages focused on the war at all or brought the war into play, whether it was sermons from the pastor on Sunday, or just at the Walther League meetings? Did you ever notice the war coming out as a theme?

A: Oh, it did. In the sermons, yes.

D: Did you have a lot of servicemen attending those kinds of things, too, at your church or Walther League?

A: Some, yes, some. There was one, he went into the service eventually, when I first met him he wasn't in the service. He was in the service later.

D: What was it like watching guys head off to active duty?

A: Well, like I said, I guess that was doing their patriotic duty. I'm sure they didn't... how shall I put it? (*pauses three seconds*) They were doing their duty I would say. It was just something you took as the natural thing for them to do.

D: Your family life, that probably didn't change too much during the war because you got married after the war, correct?

A: Yes, I got married when I came back to St. Paul.

D: So you were single during your entire time in Washington?

A: Yes.

D: And you kept busy with work and USO, and all those service things, Walther League and church?

A: Yes.

D: Did you attend school at all during the war?

A: I went back to school when I came back here [to Minnesota], for nurses training.

D: Okay. When December 7th hit, do you think things at your job changed significantly from before to after?

A: Oh, definitely. We were at war.

D: Did attitudes change at all?

A: Sure they did. This was the "war to end all wars," I remember people were saying that. I don't remember if they were saying it right at the beginning, but eventually they did.

D: That's interesting. Do you remember anyone in particular saying that, or was it more of a general impression?

A: General.

D: On to a new subject: you used bus transportation in Washington, correct?

A: Yes. We didn't have a car.

D: And you lived in an apartment?

A: Yes.

D: Did the War Department help you find that apartment, or how did you find housing when you went out there?

A: That's a good question. When I first went out there, the Walther League sponsored a place, just room and board. I went there when I first came there. A girlfriend was there already, so then we decided to get an apartment together. I can't think of the name of this place we went, but it was sponsored by the church or Walther League, for Christian young people. That's where I was until my girlfriend and I decided to get an apartment together.

D: So it was actually a place set up for people who came out there, to help them with transitional living?

A: Yes. I don't know if they could live there indefinitely or not, but it was just a place until we could find an apartment.

D: So the church was trying to do something to help all these people?

A: Yes. I don't remember the name of it, but the Walther League or church was connected with that.

D: Do you think it was hard finding places out there?

A: I don't remember, but we found one without too much difficulty.

D: But you two just moved out there on your own and took care of yourselves, it wasn't like the War Department was helping you find a place?

A: No way! *(laughs)*

D: Did they help you out in any way at all? Was the War Department just your job, you went there, eight hours a day, you left?

A: No, it was your job, you went there and did your eight hours, and when you left, your time was your own.

D: Your working hours were just eight to five, then, or did you have to work overtime?

A: No, I think it was eight to four-thirty, or something like that. I'm not sure about that, but seven sounds too early, that's in nursing! But I think it was eight to four-thirty.

D: On the job, in your office, do you remember busier or slower periods during the war?

A: We were always busy, they kept us busy. Typing up all these, and then they always had to be proofread. You had to read it with one of your workers there. Then it was all up to the captain or whatever, to look over all this after we'd done it. That I remember.

D: He'd kind of come over your shoulder and then he'd give it the stamp, or did someone else do the confidential?

A: I remember there was a civilian, and his name was Mr. Soule. The captain, I don't know if he checked over after this Mr. Soule did. He was an elderly man, that I remember. The captain was the next one up the ladder, and Captain Mauer was his name. They would check it over. You'd hand it in when we had completed what we were supposed to do, to see that it was correct. I remember the names of the ships, seeing that.

D: And it did have to go through a confidential procedure you said, they would always ship them around with those little marks?

A: Right, stamped, all these sheets had to be stamped. I think we stamped them a couple times, top and bottom. I suppose if they were taped together, you'd probably miss one. Some were secret, some were confidential.

D; Do you remember what the difference was between them?

A: No, I really don't, but I'm sure there was some reason.

D: There were a couple different levels, though, and you got told, this one is secret or confidential or top secret or whatever?

A: Yes.

D: You were out in D.C. for a few months before the war, then you stayed there until the war ended in 1945. Did you notice a change in your community, in the people around you, in the way they interacted once the war started?

A: Well, everybody was concerned about everything, food and clothes and activity. What's going to happen to the United States?

D: Do you think there was a real worry in D.C. that things could happen right there?

A: I think so, because you know –

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D: You were talking about the concerns in D.C. itself.

A: Yes, I think being the nation's capital, it seemed like that would be one of their target areas, one of their main target areas, to come there and do whatever destruction they could do.

D: If you had a fear, or if people had a fear that the nation's capital would actually be attacked, do you think it was more the Japanese or the Germans?

A: I don't know, maybe some of each. I know we had, you probably heard of the Japanese cherry trees they had around the tidal basin in D.C.? I if remember right, I think they took the Japanese name off of it, and just called it the flowering cherry trees. I remember that, because they were always the Japanese cherry trees, and the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and they thought, "Well, we have to get rid of that name." So they cancelled out the Japanese on those cherry blossoms around the tidal basin.

D: That's interesting.

A: Yeah. We used to ride bicycles around there, too. There was a place there where you could rent a bicycle around there, it was fun.

D: That's kind of a neat little story. Did you notice any attitudes towards, did you notice people talking about the Japanese and the Germans at all? Was there an attitude of dislike, or was there just an attitude that they're the enemy for this war, or what?

A: I think people thought of them as the enemy.

D: Do you remember any specific feelings at all?

A: Well, dislike. And me being German! *(laughs)*

D: Was there ever any bias against people with German names?

A: Not that I remember.

D: We talked a little about rationing, and you mentioned meat and sugar. What other kinds of things do you remember being rationed?

A: Like I said, sugar was, and I think meat was, and I remember gas. I don't know how I remember gas, because we didn't have a car, and it didn't concern us. But that

was rationed, on account of they used it during the war for vehicles and planes and all. I don't remember anything about clothes. Those were the main things I remember; there could have been more that I don't remember.

D: I remember some ladies remembering things like pantyhose; you couldn't get pantyhose.

A: That could be.

D: You don't remember that at all, though?

A: Like I said, there could have been some clothes, but I don't remember it being a problem.

D: Do you remember shortages of certain items, things that just weren't around very much?

A: Well, sometimes we went to a place, and if they were out then we'd got to another place. But, as a rule, generally, we didn't have a problem. Maybe we didn't use that much, just two of us, just my girlfriend and myself.

(B, 80)

D: Do you think the war brought your community closer together? Did the people around you spend more time with each other, or do more together?

A: Well, I was there just with friends that I'd made, you know, working there. Most of my family, I got home not very often, visiting once a year or so. But I'm sure that it did.

D: You said you did get home during the war?

A: Yes, I don't remember how often, but it could have been maybe once a year. Go on the train and you slept on the train, and it was a long train ride.

D: Do you remember anything about those long train trips?

A: Not really.

D: Did you notice any changes in your community or your family when you came back home during those war years, anything that had changed since you'd been and lived out there?

A: Oh, not really, because they kind of felt like the war was a long ways from East Grand Forks! *(laughs)*

D: Yes, North Dakota isn't exactly the war zone, is it? *(both laugh)*

A: No, it surely isn't! *(laughs)*

D: You had, was it a couple brothers?

A: I had two brothers.

D: Did they go off to service?

A: No, my oldest brother and his wife was living in St. Paul, and he worked at the munitions plant [in New Brighton], so that excused him. I don't know if he was past the draft age, but he was older than I.

D: So he got a deferment because of his job in the munitions plant?

A: Yes, and the other brother was on the farm, so they deferred him.

D: Okay, so both your brothers got deferments.

A: Yes, they didn't have to go.

D: Were you kind of glad that they didn't have to go off to the military?

A: Yes, but I wasn't here with them, because I was in D.C., so I didn't get to see them, or know about them, except what I hear. News didn't travel so fast then, as it does now.

D: What was it like being away from your family for those years, was that kind of a hard thing?

A: It was hard, I missed the family, and there were new nieces, a couple of them. My sister and her husband, they had six daughters. And you know, you missed seeing them growing up. Their first one, I was home; she was born in '39, so for that one I was there, and got to know. But the others, I would see only when I' come home. I missed that, and parents, and I had a sister too, that was younger than I. She was young when I left, and I kind of missed her growing up, a lot of her growing up years.

D: Were you homesick at all during that time?

A: Well, you missed home, yes. But we were busy there, I suppose, working and doing other things.

D: And you corresponded via letter?

A: Oh yes.

D: Did you do that pretty frequently, or was it just every once in a while that you wrote letters?

A: Oh, I'd write frequently.

D: Did you ever make phone calls during that time?

A: No, I don't remember making phone calls home. I might have, but we didn't do much of that. Back then we'd write a letter. I know it sounds strange now, to write a letter! *(laughs)*

D: I don't know if you'd have much reference for this, but think throughout the war—do you think you got financially better off during the war? Did your wages increase, did they stay about the same, or decrease? What do you remember about your financial situation during the war?

A: Well now, we didn't make much money, compared to what salaries are these days. So I suppose, with civil service you'd get a raise, I don't know how often, but I know we didn't make much working then. I wonder how we managed what we did. I remember to ride the bus, we could buy a bus pass for a dollar and a quarter and that was good for a week. I don't think you could do that today! *(laughs)* I don't remember what groceries cost back then. Bread was maybe a quarter a loaf, if it was that much, maybe just fifteen or twenty cents.

D: So money was pretty tight around that time do you think or?

A: There just wasn't that big money back then, coming out of the Depression. Just coming out of the Depression, so everything was down, salary and everything.

D: Was that one of the reasons you headed out, because there were jobs when the economy was so bad?

A: Yes, back there. We stayed there for a while [in East Grand Forks], but then we thought, we took that test, the civil service test, and we got jobs, but the jobs were not at home.

D: So the realities of the situation forced you to move?

A: Yes, we wanted a job, so that's where we went. We did, and I'm not sorry that I went. I don't know if I would have gone there later on, maybe, maybe not. I haven't been back there since.

D: How did the war affect the farm? Did things get better for them financially? I know the Depression was hard on many farmers.

A: I don't know, they just kept on the farm, kept going, doing whatever. Eventually things must have got better, because they stayed there, you know.

D: What would an average day be for you during the war?

A: You want me to tell you that after fifty some years? *(laughs)*

D: Well, to the best of your memory, I guess you're probably right, you're not going to come up with hour to hour, but do you remember what an average day looked like for you at all?

A: Well, I'd get up and go to work, we had breakfast at home. Get the bus. We'd get to work, I don't know exactly how long it took to get to work, I don't know if it took an hour or not. We had to transfer buses to get there [to work]. So we had to start kind of early. I don't remember if they had time clocks then, they must have, but I don't know how they kept track of our hours. They probably did, I don't remember that, but they knew if we were there or not. We would get a break, ten minute or fifteen minute break, a morning break, and then back to work. Lunch break. They had a little deal in the center of the Pentagon, on each floor, I was on the third floor. There was a cafeteria also, where you could get snacks and, I can't remember where the cafeteria was, but they had one. Afternoon they gave us another break. Then time to go home, whatever, 4:30 or so. Go home, do your work at home, your chores, fix supper. Then if you had other activities, get ready for them.

D: Did you notice any real changes in your life as the war went on, one year to the next year, changes because the war was continuing to go on as long as it did?

A: Not really, it seemed like it was just pretty much the same.

D: So life stayed pretty stable during those years?

A: I would say so, from what I remember.

D: I'm going to ask you about a few specific dates here. On the 12th of April, 1945, President Roosevelt died.

A: Oh yes, I remember that.

D: Do you remember what you were doing when you heard the news?

A: I don't remember where I was when I heard the news, but I remember that they let us off work half a day. We got half a day off. They had the body and the caissons, the parade, I don't remember what streets, Pennsylvania Avenue, but they gave us a half a day to go see this.

D: So did you go and see the funeral procession?

A: Oh yes.

D: What was that like?

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A: Lots and lots of people. Very sober mood.

D: Were people pretty emotional about it?

A: I remember that, yes.

D: Did it affect you personally?

A: Well yes, because Roosevelt was... what are we going to do without our president, without Roosevelt?

D: Do you remember having a great affection for Roosevelt himself, or was it more, we're without our leader now?

A: I remember listening to his speeches, we'd listen to them on the radio. I remember that, and that he was a good president.

D: So it is a day that you remember well, and you remember being at the funeral procession.

A: Yes.

D: Do you remember any specific details about the funeral procession or anything that stands out in your mind?

A: Well, there was the caisson, a horse drawn caisson, and the flag-draped casket. Just people, people all over; they lined the streets.

D: The 8th of May, 1945 is Victory over Europe Day. Do you remember that day at all?

A: Defeating the Germans? No, not really. I think I was getting ready to leave D.C. about that time.

D: When did you leave D.C.?

A: It was in the spring, but I don't remember what month.

D: So you left before the war was over?

A: Well, it was right around that time.

D: Okay, because the next day was V-J Day, and that was August 15th, 1945.

A: Oh, I left Washington before that, yes.

D: Why did you leave?

A: I had decided to go into nurses training. I'd had enough of this office work!

D: You were getting bored with it?

A: Well, I just felt like I wanted to do something more than sit and type.

D: So you were looking towards your future and decided you wanted to do something different. Did your girlfriend leave around that time, too, or did she stay?

A: She stayed in D.C.

D: For a long time?

A: No, she married and then I think they left, yes.

D: Was this right around when the war ended?

A: Yes, she stayed there, I don't remember just how long. We corresponded, we still correspond. She's in California. I think that's where her husband was from. So they're out there. We went to a dance or something, at a servicemen's center or whatever, and I think that's where she met her husband, if I remember right. So I had met him, when we were just out for the fun of it.

D: Okay. Do you remember when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

A: Oh, I remember hearing about it, yes.

D: What do you remember hearing?

A: That the Japs had been bombed. I thought, wow, a lot of destruction, loss of life.

D: How did you feel about that?

A: Well, I think it's not good for us to do, but what they did to us, there has to be some retaliation for what they did. It's what was needed to finish off the war.

D: You would have been back home by August 1945, or in St. Paul. You went straight to St. Paul after you left Washington, or did you go home [to East Grand Forks]?

A: I went home first and then came back here.

D: Do you remember when you got into St. Paul?

A: Yes, I think it was September [1945].

D: But it was after the war was over?

A: Yes. I wasn't home too long. I don't remember the exact dates. I remember coming back here and I was home for a short while. I was home first, then to St Paul.

D: September was when you came to St. Paul actually?

A: Yes.

D: Do you remember anything happening in your community when the war ended, people being all excited and things like that?

A: In D.C. they paraded in the streets, this was in D.C. when some part of the war was over. It must have been the war against Germany because I was there for that. Everybody went out into the streets and paraded, I remember that.

D: Did you get work off for that, too?

A: This was at night when we did this, when we were home from work.

D: Was this was a spontaneous thing?

A: Yes.

D: Did you go downtown because people were celebrating there?

A: Well, we didn't go downtown, just right in the neighborhood.

D: Oh really, in the middle of your residential community?

A: Out on the streets, yes, they were so happy.

D: The last couple questions I have just kind of look back on your whole war years experience. At that time, right when the war ended, what do you think the war meant to you, as a bigger thing? How did it affect your life?

A: Freedom; the United States has its freedom and kept its freedom. That's the thing we were fighting for.

D: So it was a patriotic thing?

A: Right.

D: When you look back on it from today, fifty plus years later, have your feelings about World War II changed at all, or stayed pretty much the same?

A: Yes. World War II was the war to end all wars. You probably haven't heard that, or have you heard it?

D: I've heard that with reference to this war, yes.

A: Yes, this was the war to end all wars. So look where we are now! *(laughs)* But we heard that many, many times after that, and during the war, and after the war. So where are we now? What happened?

D: How do you think the war changed your life? Did it change you as a person?

A: Well, yes, it changed my life very much. Because on account of the war I went up to Washington, D.C., and was there for four years and came back and went into nurses training. After I was an RN, there was looking for nurses, and I got letters to be recruited for the service. I didn't really what to, I thought, gee, I'm here working, doing my duty, job, whatever. I said, I don't think I want to go into the service.

D: Done enough already?

A: Well, I'm doing it right here being a nurse. They had a need for me here, so I stayed instead of going into service as a nurse.

D: Do you think it changed you as a person at all, having gone through the war?

A: Oh I'm sure, you think about other people, not just what concerns you, but what concerns your friends, your neighbors.

D: That's the last question I have for you. At this point in time, I just want to open things up and ask if there any memories you have, or stories, or any of those kinds of things about the war time that you would like to share.

A: Well, this is something personal. A young fellow that I met at Walther League at our church, we were friends. Then he went into service, he went into the Army Air Force. Then I came into training here, and he left D.C. He went his way and I went my way.

I was looking at *Lutheran Witness* [an official publication of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod], it was a couple years ago now, and here I saw his picture in there, and they had an article about him. He was in the hospital, he'd had a stroke, and it gave a little bit of his story. So I wrote to him and we've been corresponding ever since. His picture was in there and his name, he was in the hospital, at a nursing home in Montgomery Village, Maryland. It told a little bit about his life. He had married and his wife died two years ago, and they had family, I think a son and a daughter, and grandkids. All it said was, he was at this nursing home. I thought, just for the heck of it, I'll write this address here. If he gets it, all right, if not, he doesn't get it. But he did get it, and we've been corresponding for a couple years. But he's still in that nursing home. They were doing some procedure on his knee, I guess, and he had some kind of reaction, a bad one. He's paralyzed, and he has to go in a wheelchair.

D: Any other little stories that you remember about those war years?

A: No, not really I guess.

D: Okay, well thank you very much for your time, Aline. I appreciate it.

A: I don't know if this helps you, or helps in your history.

D: Oh definitely. Every little piece helps, all these stories help. So thank you very much, I'm going to turn off the transcriber now.

END OF INTERVIEW