

Eric Walz History 300 Collection

Jody Anderson – Life During WWII

By Jody Anderson

October 23, 2002

Box 1 Folder 2

Oral Interview conducted by Sidney Maggiora

Transcript copied by Alina Mower

April 2005

Brigham Young University – Idaho

SM: Where were you born?

JA: On 19th and Curtis Ave. in Idaho Falls, Id.

SM: How old were you on December 7, 1941, the day of Pearl Harbor?

JA: Fourteen years old.

SM: What do you remember about that day?

JA: I remember I was down to my sisters with a friend and the news came on the radio, there was no TV, that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Even though I didn't realize the scope of the situation, it was frightening. I remember walking home that day and we were discussing it and we didn't know all of the ramifications and the things that were going to happen with the war, we only knew that it was a very serious thing. It was scary to a fourteen-year-old and to older people too.

SM: Oh I'm sure.

JA: It would frighten anybody.

SM: What did you think about when you heard about the attack?

JA: All I remember is the fear. I knew it was a horrible thing that happened, but if we had TV, like we have it today, it would have given me more of an impact. It was . . . it was pretty frightening. I remember my sister Wanita and her husband were pretty concerned cause we knew it would take our men away. So . . . frightening, that's the word.

SM: What did you think about, or what was the overall response to the president at the time, Franklin Roosevelt?

JA: When he declared war?

SM: um hum.

JA: I was in junior high, and they called all of us into the auditorium and had a radio in there and we listened as he declared war on Japan, that wasn't on the 7th that was on the 8th. And he declared war that day and that was scary.

SM: Did the people like the president at the time, did they support him?

JA: Oh very much so, if I remember correctly he went in for four terms and died on his last one, don't quote me on that cause that could be wrong, but I think he did . . . yes people loved Franklin Delano, including me.

SM: There's been some skepticism as to whether or not he knew about the war, like knew about the strike before it actually happened on Pearl Harbor, what do you think about that?

JA: I really don't think he would allow that to happen. I think that's just somebody's imagination, somebody trying to get back at him, cause I don't think that with his personality, he was not a war monger, and I don't think he would ever, they would . . . no, no they would never have allowed that, not President Roosevelt.

SM: All right.

JA: He died when I was about 18 and that was sad. I remember crying because he died. And I don't know how everybody felt about him, but I know for me it was hard.

SM: All right. During the war what was life like, what was life like during the war on the home front while you were sending your men away?

JA: Well, they asked us to write to the fellows in the service. I remember one day I wrote 21 letters and mailed all of them. Of course stamps then were probably only three cents. What was it like? We had ration cards; we couldn't just go buy butter, meat, or gas. In fact I've got a couple of ration cards I can show you. But you had to have so many stamps for so much, like a pound of butter took "X" amount of stamps. So we didn't have a lot of, you know, things like meat, butter we ate very frugally. It was okay because it was needed for the boys over seas.

SM: How would you say the war affected the community over here?

JA: I think it pulled it together, I really do. I think that, I don't think that there was ever, I don't ever remember any anti-American talk of any kind during the years of the war and it went on for '41-2, I think it was August of '45.

SM: Did you know any young men who did not return from the war?

JA: Yes I did. Kenneth Bagshaw lived right across the ally from us. He went to war and he never returned and they never returned his body. They thought he probably was a prisoner of war and his mother saw this photograph that came, and I don't know whether it was in the paper or where it was that she saw this photograph, and she thought she saw her son Kenneth on that. The Baton March, which was a death march, but he never returned. We never saw him again.

SM: And how did his family cope with that?

JA: It was extremely hard on his mother and of course his brother who was close to him. His sister was a little younger . . . it was hard on the whole family, every one of them. It was hard on the neighborhood because, well somebody else's child becomes like your own after you live there for quite a while. It was tough, it was tough. But she

kept her hopes up, she kept thinking because she thought she saw him on this Baton March that he was coming home, that when the war ended, he would be home. But he never came back and they never shipped his body back.

SM: What was the mood of the community as a whole as young men were not returning?

JA: I don't remember how many young men were killed Sid. There were a few that we knew, but I don't remember too many of them. My brothers came back. My brothers-in-law, well I guess just one, Art. But that came home safely, for which we were very grateful.

SM: And when they came home did you find that they were struggling to readjust?

JA: Oh yeah, yes it took awhile. Kenny, Shirley moved to California while he was gone, so he came home and went directly to . . . I think he was released in Idaho Falls then he went directly to San Jose, so we didn't really have a chance to spend time with him cause he moved down there with her, well it was his wife, you know. Marvin had the worst time cause he was 41 months in the South Pacific. That's a long time. And he came home with malaria. And if I remember correctly, they gave him quinine, I saw him when he had it, and he would just sweat; sweat just like he was ringing wet, and sick just sick all over. And if I remember it was quinine. But he came through it, I don't remember when he had his last attack, but he was probably in his 30's before he got rid of it.

SM: Other than the physical problems, did it take a long time mentally for them to get back to their old selves?

JA: You know they were so happy to be home, that I didn't notice any depression or any thing like that. Like I said, Kenny was gone, but Marvin because of his illness of course you know . . . I don't think it took him that long because he was, Kenny was only 15 when he joined the national guard and when they started to talk about shipping the National Guard over seas to the South Pacific, mother got him out. She wrote letters, and I can't tell you who to, but she got him out, and then two years later, they had a draft and I can't remember how old the guys were, but once the guys hit a certain age they took them into the service. Now they could sign up if they didn't want to go into the army, they could sign up for the Navy or something like that. But Kenny went over seas and he was on D-Day over there. But he was a medic so he wasn't out on the front line. Marvin was an engineer so they built bridges and things; he never was in the thick of battle. I don't think he ever had a gun shot at him, I don't know I should have asked him, I don't know, I think he was mostly with the engineers that built the roads, cut the roads, built the bridges for the other guys to go over. But he was 41 months.

SM: That's a long time.

JA: Yeah, three years.

SM: Was he married at that time?

JA: No, no he married when he got home. You know what, I don't remember anyone going into the depression like the Vietnam soldiers had. I don't know anyone who went into depression, and my word, we had a lot of young men go in and come home, so I can't remember one that was really depressive. There was one of our neighbors that went clear through that 41 months down there, and of course they were in danger because well, they were in the war. Came home and was coming home to Idaho Falls, when out to Boise to see someone, and was killed. Never made it home. That was a sad thing, because after his mother had waited all that time for him, he was so close . .

SM: He was in a car accident?'

JA: Yeah, he was in a car accident and was killed. That must have been really hard on his mom, cause to have him so close, just a couple 100 miles away, and then to have him die, it wasn't easy.

SM: The women that had their husbands going to war, if you knew any, how did they deal with, or even you deal with having your brothers gone?

JA: That was a pretty sad time. You did a lot of crying and a lot of praying and just hoped that they'd come home safely. You'd watch for letters, you'd watch the news everyday, everyday because they'd, on the radio they'd tell us you know like with Marvin, when they'd move into different areas they would, they would let you know. Now they could not tell you specifically if they were taken over from this island to this island, because the Japs would have picked up on that. They had, what did they call her? I'm sure some of the names were not so endearing, Tokyo Rose. Did you ever hear about her? And she really did a number on those service men, she did cause they had the radios and she would lie to them and tell them "Japan's won the war, it's almost over, you might as well give up" just strategy that she hoped and that Japan hoped would work, and these guys stop fighting, but they never did. And you know what I would like to know myself; did someone tell them that Tokyo Rose was just a propaganda person? I never ever heard whether they did, but they never believed her. She would do things like play American music to make those guys homesick. And we could send much to them, yeah it was a tough time. And Lucille, Art's wife, my sister Lucille, had one little boy, and I can't remember how much money Art got from the government every month, you know, it wasn't very much but they sent that to her. They sent it directly to the wives, or at least they did her, maybe they were afraid the guys would gamble it away or something. I don't know what their reasoning was, Sidney, but Lucille got her government check the first of each month. So, but it was tough and she didn't have a job and she didn't have a lot of schooling and, actually I don't know how she made ends meet. Of course it didn't cost much at that time and she didn't have a car. So she wouldn't have gas to buy and she wouldn't have insurance. If they had insurance, I don't know whether if they did. But, she was very frugal. She sewed, and she cooked and she baked and those things for herself and the little, Larry.

SM: Did many of the women go to work to build parts and things?

JA: Oh yeah, Marge and Allen went over to work in shipyards over in Portland. And they were gone, Karen was about three, and they were over there for quite a while, and then before that they went down to Hill Air Force base and Allen worked there and Marge, I think she worked there too cause I went down for six weeks during the summer that I was 14-15, anyway I went down to take care of Karen while they worked. Yes women worked. But Lucille couldn't because of their little boy.

SM: And when the men came home was it hard for the women to give up their jobs or were they ready to give them up?

JA: I think they were ready. At that time the man was the breadwinner, and the women stayed at home and took care of the kids. That's the way it should be.

SM: All right, and back to the men in the war, what ways did you keep in touch with them, just by writing letters?

JA: Letters. Letters were censored, every letter you sent, every letter that came back from them was censored. You never sent money, it never would get there, of course they didn't need money, you know, but, that's the only way. You sure didn't want to get that telegram, that said he's gone. They used to put a gold star in the window if a young man or woman was killed. They would put a gold star in that window of that mother's home. I'm thankful we didn't have any gold stars, cause our boys were okay.

SM: During the war what was your image of Hitler, Mussolini, and Hiroshito?

JA: Well, I don't remember hating them; well I can't say that either because of what Hitler did to the Jews. And other things he did. He was a mad man, absolutely, Sadam Hussein, I didn't think he could hold a candle to, well I won't say that either cause I don't know the inside of Sadam Hussein, but Hitler was crazy. And Mussolini, I don't remember too much about any feelings towards Mussolini, and I did not hate the Japanese people, but I sure hated what they did, but I don't remember any hatred, Sidney. I would have like to have seen Hitler killed to get him to stop his resign, and Mussolini too. What they should have done was to take all three of them and put them in a cell together and left them, give them bread and water, no, no don't do that. That would be bad.

SM: What did you think about when we bombed Japan when we bombed them with the nuclear bomb?

JA: That was Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That was, it was a shock, you know we saw these pictures of people or not people, devastation and I remember reading that the people that were in the close perimeter, they were dust, just dust. It was a frightening thing, and still is. And Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and the burns on people . . . oh those who survived. I remember seeing some of these guys with their backs were just . . .

SM: Contorted.

JA: Oh contorted for sure, scarred horribly. I don't think that we were glad because the war ended, because so many people, I forgot how many now, hundreds of thousands probably, because those were two big cities. The first thought of course was the degree of suffering of the Japanese people that came to mind, but you know it had to be it saved lives in the long run, and our boys came home. And that was good. But I remember the name of the airplane that carried that over there E-L-O-N-A, now spell it backwards, now you have write it down, now just . . . ALONE. No I think they called it . . . Elona, no that's not right. Okay alone backwards A-L-O-N-E, so you do it E-N-O-L-A. Enola, Enola, that was the name of the plane that took the bomb to Hiroshima. I don't know if there were two planes . . . or if the one plane carried both bombs. They weren't atomic, they were hydrogen. So they were far more deadly. And think of the little children, but the ones in the direct hit they were gone. It's a horrible thing. If they could take every single weapon, oh you probably don't want this in here, anyway if they could take every weapon and make them into plow shares, if they did not spend money on more, every person on this earth could have homes, cars, food, instead of people starving to death, but it is not going to happen.

SM: When did you first hear about the German concentration camps?

JA: I was probably about 15 or 16. I remember after that was all over done, when the war had ended, someone said where was God when all this happened, and the reply was where was man, why did we let this happen? Well not only, I guess Russia had some problems there, but anyway, why did we let a madman kill six million Jews, we should have done something about it, that was tough, but I didn't realize the extent of what they were going through, Sidney, until after the war was over and all of these stories started coming out. I have a book, it's on the Danish people and what they did for the Jewish people and that really really touched me. The Danish people, well they would've been killed by the Germans. The Germans came into there and occupied Denmark and at night they would sneak these Jewish people across the straight into Sweden, and they had it set up pretty smart. It was pretty well done. You should read that book, I think it's called Rescue, Patty gave it to me and I would loan it out, but I would never give it away, but it was sickening when you heard what they did to take those people into those gas chambers and killed them. He was a mad man. I just, well go ahead, cause this was going to be something religious. I was going to say I wonder how he felt, Hitler, I wonder if he had to face those people when he got on the other side. How would you feel six million people waiting for you? They couldn't touch him; I'm not saying they could do anything, but within himself.

SM: Well maybe he's . . .

JA: Repented . . .

SM: Past the point of feeling I mean.

JA: That's probably right because he had no feeling here, he had no feelings here. But maybe he had something wrong, like all those guys who get into trouble and they say "Well I was abused as a child, or I was insane, or I was on drugs."

SM: There's an excuse for everything, and how did your life change as a result of WWII?

JA: I think it make me more appreciative of freedom and more grateful that I'm an American. And after the war was over and I could have all the butter and all of the bacon, I didn't eat a lot of it, it was still nice to go to the grocery store and not have to take these little books and tear out so many stamps. What they did, they gave us these books, I could show you one, anyway, each page would have so many on them, if you wanted a pound of bacon you had to use so many of these stamps or butter whatever, coffee which mom and dad used. After you got through, you had no more, or gasoline, you used your gas ones and they were gone, you could not get any more gas, you could not get anymore of that type of food. I was grateful.

SM: How did your religious beliefs help you cope with the war?

JA: I don't know that I had any religious beliefs. I wasn't even baptized 'till 1954. I went to church.

SM: What church?

JA: Oh my word, I went with my friends, wherever my friends went, I went. I almost joined the Salvation Army because of the good they did, and I went to the Baptist, I went to the Methodist, and the LDS of course and that is where I felt the spirit was at the LDS church. But I knew there was a God and I guess that's the thing that pulled me through even though I didn't have organized church, I always knew there was a God. I know Him. That's a good feeling. That's why I love that book (Jesus the Christ), you can tell. Anyway, I know that religious beliefs helped a lot of people, you know prayer and knowing that no matter what happens to your son, like the Bagshaw boy, his mother knew that even if he were killed in the war she would be with him again and she did, she died, I don't remember how long after the war, but it was okay. But so far as religious belief, you know I just went to church on my own cause mom and dad didn't go. They never stopped me from going, but they never encouraged me. My dad was not very happy. I don't know if he ever knew I did that, but I sent the missionaries to him when I was a teenager. They didn't get in the door, but its okay now cause I had him baptized. So he might just as well lived it while he was here on earth, raunchy old character.

SM: Well, do you have more thoughts on WWII?

JA: No, what's your number 22?

SM: What are some of the most vivid memories of WWII that stand out in your mind?

JA: Well, I guess the most vivid memories would be the ones that you were hurt, those things stay with you. Well and joy too. And there, right there, when those boys left and we went over to that old railroad station, the train pulled out and you heard that, that . . .

SM: The whistle?

JA: Yeah the whistle as it went south, you know that hurt, everybody was crying because we knew there was a chance of never seeing them again. But by the same token, it was exactly the opposite when they came home. It was a wonderful day. I guess those two, but you know would be the most vivid. There are so many memories of it; boys in our class, that 9th grade Cecil Langley joined and left, 9th grade- you know he was just a kid. But I don't know, the whole thing there were many, many memories, but the thing I remember most was the boys going and the boys coming home and the letters in between. It was okay after they came home.

SM: I'm sure it was.

JA: Yep, we lived through it. We weren't bombed, nobody was killed by a bomb, so we were pretty blessed.

SM: Well good. Thank you very much for having this interview with me.

JA: Now how much did you tell me you were paying me to do this?

SM: I'll have to tell you that off the record.

JA: Okay, deal.