

Eric Walz History 300 Collection

# Clarence and Lucille Butler – Life during WWII

By Clarence and Lucille Butler

October 11, 2003

## Box 3 Folder 1

Oral Interview conducted by Amy Law

Transcript copied by Devon Robb      August 2005

Brigham Young University – Idaho

Lucille Butler: The first is where you were born. I was born in Ogden, Utah. How old you were on December the seventh. I was nineteen. What do you remember about that day? That was a big day for us. That particular day we were having a stake conference. Clarence sang in the Ogden Tabernacle choir so he was in the conference and it was his birthday.

Amy Law: It was a stake that they had?

LB: A stake conference.

AL: How big a stake was that?

LB: There was three or four stakes in Ogden and they were dividing our stake into making a south Ogden stake out of it. That's at the time my father was made, put in as stake presidency. So I was there when they were having this conference. It was all on this day it was Clarence's birthday. He was twenty-two that day.

Clarence Butler: Yeah.

LB: And that evening we were to take my sister up. She had come home from her mission. We were to take her up to Honeyville to see one of her old companions, and that's when we heard all of the thing about the attack on Pearl Harbor.

AL: How did you hear about it?

LB: On the radio in the car that we heard it all. The whole thing. Course that made us excited because we were engaged to be married. At that time we had bought our home and, and the thought was, is he gonna be drafted because as soon as Pearl Harbor was attacked we figured the United States was going into the war so we decided to get married then.

AL: What was the original date?

LB: We were gonna get married in the spring. We figured it would take us from fall... we bought our house in August. We figured it would take us from August to Spring to have the money to buy the furniture to fit in the house. It was a brand new home, and all our life we'd been taught not to go into debt. So we figured by spring, we'd have enough money to pay for our furniture. We didn't talk about that part of it, but we went back to my mother and dad's that night and told them we wanted to get married as soon as we could. We decided to get married on the seventeenth. It was just ten days. And no furniture, but Clarence's Uncle owned a furniture store and so we went in there and talked to him. He sold us the whole thing on time which was our first experience with being on time things. Course, the attack was a shock that was a real shock to hear that Pearl Harbor had been bombed, because like I said before, the Japanese Embassy was in Washington D.C. negotiating with President Roosevelt at the time. And so nobody really expected them to come in and bomb Pearl Harbor and it was suicide attacks. They just

dove down into the ships and destroyed them. And so it, it was really a scary thing. At that time Clarence was working at the arsenal. And he was getting furloughs. I mean they were every six months his draft would come up and he'd get 'em because it was an essential job.

I think we talked about the economy of Ogden at that time and the, you asked me about the depression, the period of time. During the depression, course, the banks closed. Everybody lost their money, lost their homes, lost their jobs. And they were in pretty dire circumstances. We were fortunate. My father had a really good job, our home was paid for, and so we weren't in that kind of a circumstance. But he was the bishop and so they rallied around the entire ward became one unit of family and would go to each one of these homes and find out what people needed and what they could do. They rebuilt homes, they did a lot of things. Made big gardens to feed 'em and everything. It was really neat. But as we were beginning to come out of the depression, the government came in there and built the Ogden arsenal, Hillfield, and the supply depot. And the supply depot was all of the supplies for the army service. This brought the economy back and everybody was, had good jobs, excellent jobs at that time. And Clarence was working for the government at the arsenals as a foreman there. It asks whether I was working. I was actually in college at that time. I was going to school at Weber College and I, we had, the government came into the school and offered us to take tests to see if we could be trained to be supervisors at the arsenal. And I passed all the tests and so they offered me a supervisor job, which sounded wonderful to me, you know, big money and everything. And Clarence didn't want me to go in there. He said, he just didn't want me to get involved in it because it was bombs and ammunition working in that kind of atmosphere and so I didn't take the job.

Is there anything you wish they would've told you about, I presume, for the war? Oh, it asked if I went in the war and I said, no, I didn't. I didn't go into the service. Clarence and I were married. We were married about fifteen months when they brought in a new, I don't know what they called him.

Clarence: Commanding Officer.

LB: Commanding Officer and he thought it was terrible that these young men were working there at the arsenal and not in the war. They could bring in old men to work in there. And so he immediately put 'em all into the draft and he got his draft call to go in the service. And that was, we married fifteen months at that time. My sister came to live with me. Her husband was in the service too. In fact, I don't know how far back we were when I said all of my sisters' husbands were in the service and my brother. They all came back safely, but they were all involved in the war. This asks about our opinion of Hitler and Mussolini and so on and that was, I mean we didn't have a good opinion of any of 'em. The things that we heard, and we were pretty well kept in tune at all times. The radio was constantly all day long would have about the wars and the, and I can't remember what they call it. When you go to a show.

Leanne Law(Amy's Mother): Oh, the news real.

LB: They had the news real. They would have everything updated of everything that was going on in the various places and of course we didn't have a good opinion of any of 'em as far as that was concerned. It also asked about the Japanese and German and I didn't have any feeling against 'em. We had Japanese people in our ward that we were very good friends to 'em. You know, we didn't have any odd feelings. But I certainly understood why they put them in those concentration camps.

CB: They weren't concentration camps.

LB: Well, they called it concentration camps. The Japanese did.

CB: Yeah, they did.

LB: They felt they were in there, and the thing was that they didn't know who was a spy and who was not a spy. Because the Japanese people, as they came into America they would work really hard people, but they would send most of their money back to Japan to their families, to take care of them because those people were in dire circumstances back there. And so, because that close communication they didn't know who was and who was not a spy. And so they just put 'em all in these camps. They were in barracks about the like soldiers were living in. And they just felt, I know they felt, and they still do have a great resentment that they were taken out of their places and put in there.

LL: What were they called? Internment camps of something?

CB: Yeah. Internment camps.

AL: How well informed were you on the war as you were out there?

CB: Very well informed of it. In fact we were right behind third army all the way through.

LB: They just followed through from England, France, Luxemburg, and Germany right into it.

CB: And there was an army newspaper called the stars and stripes that came out every weekend that kept everything up to date. Then the, when we were on the planes of (indistinguishable) I had a chance to (indistinguishable) my outfit and go into head quarters and I was right with third army headquarters. We had to call the airfields and find out what their ammunition status was, how many bombs they had and how much ammunition, then forward that information to third army headquarters and then they would plan the flights and the attack.

LB: I don't know how far we were on this tape, but the next one is what did you contribute as an individual to the community? Roy was not a community. All it consisted of at the time was just a grocery store and a little lumber yard and a (indistinguishable) pool hall. And the lumber yard, this was the man that was building these homes. This was

all farm community and orchards. And he was dividing them up into one acres and building new homes on these one acres. And that's what we bought. There also was the, what they called the infirmary or the old folks home that was people in the county who could not take care of themselves any longer. And that was across the street from our church. And we had one ward in Roy and that was all there was. My sister and I had no transportation. It asked about the kind of food in our community there. We were about a mile and a half to two miles from the church and about two miles from the grocery store. And about a mile to the Bandburger train if you wanted to go into Ogden. So we walked everywhere. We didn't have a car. Clarence had taken his car to his dad's place when he left cause I didn't drive. But gas was rationed, tires were rationed. Anything that had rubber was non-existent. Anything that was leather was non-existent. Shoes were a disgrace, they just, you know, they were made out of whatever they could and they were terrible. Food was rationed. We had stamps for the food such as sugar was rationed, and when it come in the fall to can fruit they would allow so much for each person in the family. And all the meat. I don't know if the story of the chicken was on there.

AL: It's on the other side.

LB: 'K' I won't go through that one.

AL: How much did stuff cost back then?

LB: It wasn't expensive. You know, around that period of time of the depression and shortly after that it began to raise, but you could buy a loaf of bread for five cents. You could pay about fifteen cents a pound or twenty-five cents at the most for say hamburger.

CB: Gasoline was fifteen cents a gallon.

LB: Yeah, it was really inexpensive, but then too we didn't have a lot of money either.

CB: You worked for dollar a day. That was wages.

LB: And that's why the economy of this depot and arsenal and that coming and the wages went up. Then of course prices went up.

CB: And every time we got a raise, prices in town would just raise it up to the floorboard.

LB: They'd raise it a little more for it and we just didn't try to buy them. And I, was this on about the flannel was that on the other side?

AL: That was on the first side.

LB: Okay, then I guess I don't need to go in that one.

CB: She said it was on the first side.

LB: Oh, it's on this one.

LL: Yeah, I want to hear the flannel.

LB: Okay, well, material was just non-existent. I mean it was very, very hard to get anything. Clothing and stuff like this, especially cottons. And they didn't make such things as pampers, you know, diapers, you had to make them yourself out of flannel and flannel was non-existent. Well, there was a, came out in the paper that JC Penney's had this sale on flannel and both my sister and I were expecting babies and so we went into town the night before on the train and rushed down there and we were there about an hour and a half to two hours standing in line to go get this flannel. And just shortly before the store was to open my sister passed out. And there she was in this big crowd and she passed out. We took her down up out of the crowd and she sat down on the gutter, there waiting and the door opened and they said rush in and get the flannel so I went in. It was upstairs and I told her I wanted, you know, it was limited ten yards for the flannel and somebody hollered this lady's sister passed out downstairs you better give her extra. So she gave me twenty yards and we were able to make the babies' diapers, and little nighties and stuff out of it you know so that we were able to at least have something on our kids when they were born.

And then there was another one I told probably at the same time that a small appliance was non-existent, and you just couldn't buy an electric iron, you couldn't buy a toaster anything such as that. Well, it came out in the paper that Jo Jay Lowes was having a sale and they had electric irons. And I had a friend that was getting married so I decided I would go stand in that line and see if I could get her an electric iron. I stood in this line. Anytime you went anywhere it was a line. But I did get the electric iron. I gave it to her at her wedding and everybody accused me of black market. They asked me where I'd gone on the black market to find an electric iron.

Okay it said what was it like to have all the young men gone to the war. Well, course we were all married and what we did we organized a group of war widows as we were called and we met about once a month and got together and talked and buoyed each other up and did a little embroidering or knitting or whatever they wanted to do just kind of met together. This helped a lot to get through it.

AL: Did you do it everyday?

LB: No, just about once a month was all we did. All of these girls lived in Ogden and course we were living out in Roy, so it meant we had to go in on the train in order to spend some time with them. And of course, like I said, my brother and all of my sister's husbands had left. I have four sisters. All of their husbands were in the war but they all came back. Every one of them came back safely. It asks here about the concentration camps. And what we heard about 'em. My brother-in-law was stationed at (indistinguishable), and it was just horrid. And everything that you see in pictures, everything that you see in stories is true. It was true. He saw all that and he took a lot of pictures and brought them home and told us a lot about 'em.

There was a young man that used to come here home teaching and he was in one of the Japanese concentration camps and he said he lived in a little tiny cement stall like

and he could not lay down, he could not sit down, he was just crouched in there like an animal.

AL: How long was he in there for?

LB: I don't remember how long he said he was in there. Do you?

CB: No.

LB: But somehow they made a break, and they went through Saigon. But the next area anyway, they had to go through jungles and finally got through but it took them months before they got to freedom. He had some pretty hair raising stories to tell us about that and from what I understand it was just as horrible in any one of those Japanese camps. They made 'em work in mines they practically starved them and they had these long marches where they marched for days and days and they nearly starved to death. And if they didn't, if they fell at all they'd shoot 'em. They didn't care, life was of no value. Now did you come into this one where it said we kept in touch with each other.

AL: That was on the first side so I need to hear that.

LB: Okay, well Clarence and I made a vow when he left that we would write every single day. I wrote to him everyday and he wrote to me everyday. And sometimes we'd get seven letters at one time, and the same with him. He would get seven letters. We were never able to go together during the war period. I stayed home because he was in boot camp and then he went to schooling in Maryland and from there they shipped him right overseas. So I never had the opportunity to go with him. All my sisters did. They went with their husbands until they were overseas, they stayed with them, and that wasn't an easy thing either. None of that was easy. Now what else do you think was not on?

AL: How did you and your sister during the war spend your days? What exactly did you do?

LB: Actually when the babies were born we played with the babies until they'd go to sleep. I mean now for us. And she had housework and then I did genealogy. I decided at that period of time, this would be an excellent time for me to visit with all of his relatives that were living and mine of the older generation and get as much information and as many pictures and stories as I could possibly get from them. And I would go and spend hours with Clarence's grandmother and some of the different relatives and they would tell me stories I'd write 'em down. Clarence's grandmother was an ardent genealogist and she let me copy all her genealogy and I got all of that. And ironically, I had such a strong feeling of this and after I had got all this material from my grandfathers both my grandfathers died suddenly. My one grandfather was perfectly fine and went to what they called the old folks or the senior citizen parlor, caught a cold there and got pneumonia and died. My other grandfather within the same year just collapsed like that and they called the doctor and he said, he's dying and in four days he was gone. And yet I had gotten all this material from the week before and I felt like this as not an intuition. I think

I was guided to do all of this when we could. And when we came here afterwards, when we decided to sell out and come here afterwards all of that would have been lost I would never have had all that material that I had when he did die.

AL: Speaking of doctors was there a lack of them when the war came. Did a lot of them have to go to war to help out and all that?

LB: I think the younger ones did. There was still plenty of old ones there. Speaking of doctors it cost me fifty dollars, fifty dollars to stay one whole week in the hospital when our baby was born. I was not allowed to get off the bed. The nurses had to come and bath you and take care of you. You were not allowed to even sit up. Fifty dollars.

AL: For a week?

LB: For a whole week.

CB: And our doctor only got (indistinguishable). Told us he said pneumonia is the old person's best friend. Three years later it got him.

LB: He died.

LL: Oh, is that right?

LB: But he was a wonderful doctor. He was a wonderful doctor and we enjoyed him. And he charged me fifty dollars. The hospital was fifty dollars and he charged me fifty dollars to deliver our first baby.

LL: Did you hear about many casualties?

LB: Not in our immediate family. I told her that our cousins and Clarence's cousins and all of my family none of them, thankfully, were killed nor injured. None of them were injured. My sister's husband came awful close. They put him, he was in coast artillery, and when they sent him overseas they put him in the infantry and made him and his companion go through the fields to find the mines. You know the Germans had land mines hidden all over the land. And they would go through and when they would find one they would mark a tree and then they would go further and when they'd find one and mark another tree. Well there was Germans watching them and when they went through they went and marked different trees and as they were coming back his companion was hit with a landmine and wasn't killed but it blew his legs and his arms off. And we had a military hospital there in Brigham and they brought him to the military hospital and then I went up there to see him and that brought the reality of what this war was all about to see him. What do you do with a body and no arms, no legs, you know what I mean? And he lived.

LL: Did you have casualties in your ward area?



LB: Uh, no. Not in Roy. There might have been some. Yes there was some in Ogden. The ward that I grew up in there was two brothers killed. The Stevens family lost two boys. I don't know. I don't remember if there was any more.

CB: There was quite a number of them that I went to High School with.

LB: But see, when we moved out of Ogden and was living in Roy we weren't aware of all of them, were we? We had one cousin in prison. He was taken prisoner but he came back safe.

CB: (Indistinguishable) flying a B-24, hit and parachuted out.

LL: How were the Italians treating prisoners? Where they rough on prisoners? Cause it sounds like the Japanese sound like they were horrible.

CB: They weren't half as bad as the Japanese.

LB: The Germans and the Japanese were just murders that's all there was to it. But you know life was not important to the Japanese either because they would go down and drop there planes right on anything they could and commit suicide for their country so it.

CB: (Indistinguishable) if life don't mean anything.

LB: I don't know what else we didn't have on there.

AL: Was it harder having a child and going through the war or did that help a lot?

LB: That really helped.

CB: She was seven months pregnant when I was drafted.

LL: I was going to say how old was the baby before you got to see it?

CB: I got furloughs to go home and bless it.

LB: In August.

CB: In August, yeah.

LB: And they had to come on the train which was four days. He was home two days and then they had to go to back on the train four days. So he was only home two days. And Chad was born in May and we waited 'til he could come home in August.

CB: I was in the school, in Maryland when the baby was born and then I went down to South Carolina and then I was shipped overseas. I took my basic training in Miami Beach, Florida then I was shipped up through, oh what's the name of that, that's down in

Florida, right next to Texas? Now that was a hell hole that was. It just felt like it was pressure pressing down on you all the time. And there was more guys take time (indistinguishable) on the barracks. That's a hell hole.

LB: Everybody that went there said that.

LL: Tampa, Florida?

LB: Don't go to Tampa, Florida if you're gonna move.

CB: Miami Beach, Miami, they're beautiful. It's nice there.

LL: But Tampa wasn't?

CB: Tampa. Hot and muggy just like a pressure pushing down on you all the time. I don't know the air was just thick.

(Paper ends)