Jeanne Wexler
Rosie the Riveter and the World War II American Home Front Oral History Project

Interviews Conducted by
Arielle Carrick
in 2012
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Rosie the Riveter and the World War II American Home Front Oral History Project: An Oral History with Jeanne Wexler conducted by Arielle Carrick, Date, Department of History and American Studies, University of Mary Washington, 2012.
Discursive Table of Contents—Jeanne Wexler

1-00:00:02
Family background, born 1927, family of four, Depression days—father was a furrier: Jeanne worked at Woolworth's—Relationship with sister, Neighborhood: Race relations, School

1-00:11:07
Jeanne's work experience, More depression—race relations

1-00:14:02
World War II—Pearl Harbor, Rations, Victory Gardens, Black outs, Air raid sirens, Culture—Barbie Soxers, Frank Sinatra: Concerts, Franklin Roosevelt as Commander in Chief

1-00:21:04
End of the war—Times Square, Bombings on Japan, Holocaust—Possible Government cover up, After the war—Pioneer Women

2-00:00:13
Marriage—was 22 years old, Work Experience—Woolworth's, Volunteer work—Knittin for Britain, Work after the war—fashion design

2-00:05:35
Culture—Fun with friends, Propaganda—None, Movies

2-00:07:36
Antisemitism, High School

2-00:12:10
Feelings after the war, Pioneer Women
Interview with Jeanne Wexler
Interviewed by: Arielle Carrick
Transcriber: Arielle Carrick
[Interview #1-October 15, 2012]

1-00:00:02
**Arielle:**
What is your full name and your date of birth?

1-00:00:08
**Jeanne:**

1-00:00:15
**Arielle:**
Okay. And what is your date of birth?

1-00:00:17
**Jeanne:**
June 28, 1927

1-00:00:22
**Arielle:**
And where were you born?

1-00:00:24
**Jeanne:**
New York City

1-00:00:26
**Arielle:**
Did you live in New York City for your whole life?

1-00:00:31
**Jeanne:**
When I got married I moved to Providence, Rhode Island. But I was 22.

1-00:00:38
**Arielle:**
Okay.

1-00:00:40
Jeanne:
Okay.

1-00:00:40
Arielle:
Where were your parents born?

1-00:00:44
Jeanne:
Oh. My mother was born in the Ukraine.

1-00:00:49
Arielle:
And where was your father born?

1-00:00:51
Jeanne:
My father was born in Lithuania.

1-00:00:57
Arielle:
Oh okay. Did you get along with your parents when you were growing up?

1-00:01:05
Jeanne:
Of course!

1-00:01:08
Arielle:
Can you describe your relationship with your parents?

1-00:01:12
Jeanne:
They were wonderful parents. My father acted like a father should act. And my mother she was a wonderful mother.

1-00:01:23
Arielle:
What did your parents do for a living?

1-00:01:31
Jeanne:
Well my mother was a housewife. And my father was a furrier.
Arielle: And what was that?

Jeanne: A furrier? That was when people wore fur coats.

Arielle: Okay. And did he sell those?

Jeanne: He manufactured them.

Arielle: Oh, okay. [pause] What was--

Jeanne: Then, yeah. Then he gave that up and then he went into the stock market.

Arielle: And how was that?

Jeanne: He did very well.

Arielle: Did that... continue during the Depression?

Jeanne: No. That...no.

Arielle: No. What was...-
Yes.

1-00:02:26

Jeanne:
Yep.

1-00:02:28

Arielle:  
What do you remember about the Depression?

1-00:02:33

Jeanne:
Well we lived in a pretty fair place uh nice house. I know my friends didn't live like you know where the whole family lives in one room. There's one incident about the depression that sticks in my mind. I was about nine years old, and I'm walking down the street and it was snowing and there was an old lady sitting outside on a chair in the snow with all her furniture piled up. Crying. I guess she didn't pay her rent, so they threw her out of the apartment and..and she wanted to protect her furniture, so she was sitting near in the snow. Uhh. What an incident that was.

1-00:03:30

Arielle:
That's really sad.

1-00:03:31

Jeanne:
It is.

1-00:03:33

Arielle:
Did you see a lot of that growing up during the Depression?

1-00:03:36

Jeanne:
No well that was one incident. Then I had a girlfriend and the family lived over a store. There were like five..five or six members in the family. And they were-they only had two chairs. Could you believe that? And the family would sit all day on a chair looking out the window.

1-00:03:59

Arielle:
What was a normal day like for you and your family when you were growing up?

1-00:04:09

Jeanne:
Well. I just went to school. Came back. I was one of those people that did homework at the last minute.

1-00:04:23

Arielle:
Did you get good grades?
Jeanne: Yeah, I did. And I shared...I shared a bedroom with my sister. We had twin beds.

Arielle: Did you only have your sister? Was she your only sibling?

Jeanne: Yes. She's a younger sister. Yep.

Arielle: What's her name?

Jeanne: Sylvia.

Arielle: And how many years younger is she?

Jeanne: Five years.

Arielle: Five years younger?

Jeanne: Yep.

Arielle: What was your relationship like with her when you were growing up?

Jeanne: Uh a good relationship. You know a lot of siblings fight with each other. We didn't fight—the only time is when say I ironed out a blouse and it took me an hour and she, she wore it. I used to get mad about that.
Did you have any extended family nearby? Like any aunts or uncles?

1-00:05:24
Jeanne:
Well my grandparents.

1-00:05:28
Arielle:
How far away did they live from you?

1-00:05:33
Jeanne:
Well until my father bought the house we lived in my grandfather's house. He owned the house and we lived in the apartment downstairs and they lived upstairs.

1-00:05:49
Arielle:
What was your neighborhood like....when you were growing up?

1-00:05:54
Jeanne:
It was a good neighborhood. Uh well, our street like like mostly Jewish people on that street. And then like if you walked straight down the street like there's a Polish neighborhood so a lot of Polish people lived there.

1-00:06:16
Arielle:
And did you see a lot of separation between the Polish and the Jewish community?

1-00:06:21
Jeanne:
Yes. There was. Yep.

1-00:06:23
Arielle:
How so?

1-00:06:24
Jeanne:
And there was also non-Polish neighborhood...there was a black neighborhood.

1-00:06:29
Arielle:
Was there a lot of racism?

1-00:06:35
Jeanne:
Uh no. I don't think—well... I remember one incident. I was walking to the library when I was a kid
with my sister. And I had a notebook with a ruler sticking out. And this black kid jumps out in front of me and he starts yelling names, you know, like “dirty Jew,” and he was running back and forth and wouldn’t let us pass. So you know what, I took out my ruler and I hit him over the shoulder and he ran away crying.

Arielle:
So there was a distinct separation between the black community and the Jewish community in your neighborhood?

Jeanne:
Yes.

Arielle:
And was there a distinction between the Polish community and the Jewish community?

Jeanne:
Yes.

Arielle:
How were the relations between all the different communities?

Jeanne:
I think—they each stuck to their own kind.

Arielle:
Did you have a lot of friends in your neighborhood?

Jeanne:
Yes I did.

Arielle:
Who was your best friend?

Jeanne:
Let me see. I had a lot of good friends. I had the girl next door. I think one summer we played Monopoly every day the whole summer. And uh...I had a lot of friends. Rita..I had another friend named Rita. That was the one that lived over the store.
Arielle: M-hmm.

Jeanne: Yeah.

Arielle: What were the houses in your neighborhood like? Were they like brownstones or were they more traditional homes?

Jeanne: [Inaudible] Brickhouses.

Arielle: Were they all connected? Like they are today in New York?

Jeanne: Well...you mean...well when we lived with my grandparents they were like driveways in between each house. But then when my father bought a house...it uh...the houses were connected. [Pause] In fact, Donald Trump's father was a builder, and he built most of those houses in New York.

Arielle: Oh wow.

Jeanne: Yeah...it was a Trump house.

Arielle: [Laughs]. Have you been back to the neighborhood that you grew up in recently?

Jeanne: Well it's four hours away from where I live now, you know.

Arielle: When is the last time you were there...in your old neighborhood?
It was when my father passed away. That was, uh, when I went back again.

1-00:09:27  
**Arielle:**  
And where there any changes from then until when you were a kid until more recently?

1-00:09:36  
**Jeanne:**  
Well, a lot of Russians moved into the neighborhood. That's like after I graduated from high school.

1-00:09:48  
**Arielle:**  
And did you go to high school in New York?

1-00:09:50  
**Jeanne:**  
Yes. Lincoln.

1-00:09:52  
**Arielle:**  
What high school did you go to?

1-00:09:53  
**Jeanne:**  
Abraham Lincoln.

1-00:09:56  
**Arielle:**  
And what was the student population like at your high school.

1-00:10:03  
**Jeanne:**  
Well, not many kids. But it was a Jewish neighborhood. So I would say that like 90% of the kids were Jewish.

1-00:10:12  
**Arielle:**  
Okay.

1-00:10:15  
**Jeanne:**  
We had a lot of famous people graduating from that high school.

1-00:10:19  
**Arielle:**  
Like who?

1-00:10:20  
**Jeanne:**
Do you know Arthur Miller? The one who wrote *Death of a Salesman*?

1-00:10:26

**Arielle:**
Okay.

1-00:10:27

**Jeanne:**
And we had John Forsyth. He's an actor. That's not his real name. And um, let me see who else? Neil Diamond!

1-00:10:41

**Arielle:**
Oh, that's cool.

1-00:10:42

**Jeanne:**
He lived right around the corner from me. And his father, well he's younger than I am, and his father owned a Dry Goods store. Where my mother used to go shopping. And Neil Sedaka. You ever hear of him?

1-00:10:59

**Arielle:**
No.

1-00:11:00

**Jeanne:**
Yeah. He's another singer.

1-00:11:04

**Arielle:**
Oh that's pretty cool.

1-00:11:06

**Jeanne:**
Yep.

1-00:11:07

**Arielle:**
Did you grow up working when you were in high school?

1-00:11:11

**Jeanne:**
Well I had a part time job. In Woolworths. Did you ever hear of Woolworths?

1-00:11:19

**Arielle:**
No I haven't.
Jeanne: It was a five and ten cents store. That's when you could get something for ten cents.

Arielle: And what did you do at that job?

Jeanne: You know I stood behind the counter. I worked like Thursday after school like from 4-9 and on Saturday.

Arielle: Did you enjoy working there?

Jeanne: It's okay. I really didn't need the money. But I was very independent. I always liked to make my own money.

Arielle: What do you remember about the Depression with your family? You said that your dad was in the stock market?

Jeanne: No he got into the stock market after the Depression.

Arielle: Oh, after the Depression. So did your family struggle a lot during the Depression?

Jeanne: No.

Arielle: What was it like seeing other families struggle and you guys weren't struggling as badly?

Jeanne: Well, you know, I didn't feel superior to anybody. I felt that they were just like me.
Arielle:  
Did you notice a distinction between the different communities? Like the Polish and the Jewish and the black communities, was there one group that suffered more during the Depression than the other group?

1-00:12:57  
Jeanne:  
Well everybody suffered I think. But I think the maybe the blacks suffered more.

1-00:13:04  
Arielle:  
Why do you think that was?

1-00:13:07  
Jeanne:  
I don't know.

1-00:13:08  
Arielle:  
Did they work a lot--

1-00:13:09  
Jeanne:  
I remember after we moved, near the train station-the subway, on Friday, black women would come down from Harlem, and they would, you know, want to clean your house. And my mother got one of these black women, Lucy. I remember her name. She used to clean every Friday and she would clean the house for a quarter an hour. Would you believe it?

1-00:13:47  
Arielle:  
No. Okay so now we're going to kind of switch into after the Depression and into the war. So how do you remember hearing about Pearl Harbor?

1-00:14:02  
Jeanne:  
I remember I was sitting in the kitchen on a cold December morning. December 7th. I was eating breakfast and we had a little radio in the kitchen. And it came over that the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. That's when I first heard about it.

1-00:14:23  
Arielle:  
And do you remember what your first thoughts about it were?

1-00:14:29  
Jeanne:  
I was kind of shocked. I was shocked about it.
Arielle:
How did your parents react to Pearl Harbor?

Jeanne:
Well, everybody you know, my father had relatives in Europe. And of course, he was worried about his relatives. [Pause] My mother was very patriotic. Yeah, but they had food rationing. They had food rationing during the war.

Arielle:
What kind of rationing did you have? Was it a lot?

Jeanne:
Yeah well. It's not like food stamps. You couldn't get meat. You know, you had to show the stamp, and you only got a certain amount of meat a week. And canned goods—you could only get a certain amount of canned goods. And you couldn't get coffee. You couldn't get coffee at all. And they had some kind of coffee substitute, called Chickery. And you couldn't get—you had to have a stamp to get sugar.

Arielle:
Was it hard living off of rations?

Jeanne:
Not really. And my mother, we had a floor backyard. And she planted a garden.

Arielle:
Was it a victory garden?

Jeanne:
They used to call it a victory garden.

Arielle:
And what was that like, having a victory garden?

Jeanne:
Well, I don't know how much [Inaudible]. But also when I went to Lincoln high. We had a piece of land next to the school, and some of the kids planted a victory garden over there.

Arielle:
Did a lot of people in your community have victory gardens?
Jeanne:
Not really. But my mother liked to garden.

Arielle:
How did the war affect your life?

Jeanne:
Well as a typical teenager, it didn't really affect my life. But we had cousins that were in the armed forces. My cousins.

Arielle:
Did you have a lot of people in your family go fight in the war?

Jeanne:
Well one cousin was sent to the Panama canal zone to protect the canal zone. His younger brother was in the air force and his plane went down and he died.

Arielle:
How was learning about Pearl Harbor and World War II different than learning about more present wars such as Vietnam or Iraq and Afghanistan?

Jeanne:
Well I think people were very patriotic. I lived a block or two away from the beach and they had a boardwalk going all the way down for 3 miles. And they were afraid that there might be submarines so every light on the boardwalk was painted black.

Arielle:
How was that? Was it scary?

Jeanne:
Oh well--and they used to have air raid drills. Every street had an air raid warden. And then when they would blow a siren you were supposed to put all your lights out.

Arielle:
Did you have those a lot?
Jeanne:
Yeah. Quite a bit.

1-00:18:48

Arielle:
How did those affect your everyday life growing up?

1-00:18:54

Jeanne:
It really didn't affect my life. I was, I don't know if you've ever heard of Barbie Soxers?

1-00:19:04

Arielle:
No I haven't.

1-00:19:06

Jeanne:
Those are short socks. White socks. That teenage girls used to wear. And Frank Sinatra was really
becoming popular. You've heard of Frank Sinatra haven't you?

1-00:19:20

Arielle:
Oh yes.

1-00:19:21

Jeanne:
And was playing at the New York Paramount. Ands the girls would go and stand in line for hours to get
into New York Paramount to hear Frank Sinatra. And they would call them Barbie Socks because the
girls used to wear those white socks with loafers with a penny in the loafer or saddle shoes. I was one
of those girls.

1-00:19:50

Arielle:
So you enjoyed music and culture during the war?

1-00:19:53

Jeanne:
I still love Frank Sinatra. Yeah I still listen to his music.

1-00:20:06

Arielle:
What did you and your parents think of Roosevelt as commander and chief during the war? Did you
think he did a good job?

1-00:20:14

Jeanne:
Oh, they adored him.
Arielle: What did you think about him?

Jeanne: I don't know. I didn't think too much. I guess I liked him too. You know because of the war, they didn't want to interrupt, you know he ran for two terms. They didn't want to have an election with another president, so he entered a third term. And then he died during the war and Truman was the Vice President so he became President.

Arielle: What did you think of Truman?

Jeanne: I thought he was a great President.

Arielle: Did you like him or FDR better as a President?

Jeanne: Well Truman ended the war. So I really like him. I remember the last--when the war finally ended and the Japanese surrendered. I remember that day.

Arielle: What do you remember about it?

Jeanne: Oh, some of my friends and I took the train to Times Square. And there were like a million people there in Times Square. There's a famous photo of a sailor kissing a woman. Have you seen it?

Arielle: I have.

Jeanne: Well, he wasn't the only one kissing. Everybody was kissing everybody. They were so happy that the war was over. I remember that day.
Sounds like a pretty good memory.

1-00:22:00

Jeanne:
Oh yeah. Well you couldn't forget that. How everybody was kissing everybody.

1-00:22:07

Arielle:
What did you think of the decision to drop a bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

1-00:22:14

Jeanne:
I thought it was horrible. But the Japanese—well, it was either them or us. And I would rather it be us. So we had to end to end the war that way. There was no other way.

1-00:22:32

Arielle:
Were there a lot of Japanese in your community? I know that on the west coast there was a lot of internment with the Japanese. Did you see that at all?

1-00:22:39

Jeanne:
No there were no Japanese.

1-00:22:40

Arielle:
There were no Japanese?

1-00:22:42

Jeanne:
No.

1-00:22:43

Arielle:
But you did have a large Jewish community?

1-00:22:45

Jeanne:
Yes.

1-00:22:46

Arielle:
Living in a Jewish community, what did you know about the Holocaust as a Jew living in the United States. Was there a lot of information about it?

1-00:22:56

Jeanne:
Not too much.
Arielle: What did you know?

Jeanne: My father had two brothers. Two younger brothers living in Europe and he didn't know what was happening with them.

Arielle: And were they in Lithuania?

Jeanne: Well one brother, the Nazi's must have got him and his family. We don't know what happened to him. And the younger brother, who is 14 years younger than my father, he fought in the Polish Resistance Army and they fought in the forest. And he got an eye shot out. And so a Polish family hid him, they took care of him, they hid him in the house, and a few months later the war was over. And he was sent to a displaced persons camp. And then he met his wife there. And her whole family was wiped out.

Arielle: That's sad.

Jeanne: I remember my father got him into America. I remember that day.

Arielle: When was it?

Jeanne: I don't know. Every member of the family showed up at the docks. People didn't travel too much by plane in those days. And they had a baby in a carriage, and I remember when the finally walked off the dock there was like 20 people there and every one of us was crying.

Arielle: So it was a really good memory?

Jeanne: Oh yeah, a really good memory. And then he came to our house. He stayed there for like six weeks or so. We had an extra little bedroom were the three of them had to stay. They couldn't even get an
apartment then. Finally my father found them an apartment. He had to pay $1500 to get the apartment so my Uncle and his family stayed there. And my father gave him a job. But he hated the big city.

1-00:25:41  
**Arielle:**  
Why did he hate it?

1-00:25:43  
**Jeanne:**  
He hated it. So he bought a little chicken's farm in New Jersey. So he moved to New Jersey.

1-00:25:59  
**Arielle:**  
What did you know about the Holocaust? Did you know anything specific? Did you even know there was a Holocaust?

1-00:26:09  
**Jeanne:**  
Not too much. I didn't know too much.

1-00:26:12  
**Arielle:**  
Was that information covered up by the Government?

1-00:26:17  
**Jeanne:**  
I think it was.

1-00:26:19  
**Arielle:**  
By Franklin Roosevelt?

1-00:26:23  
**Jeanne:**  
I think it was. What was the ship with about 400 Jewish people that tried to get into Florida to escape what was happening in Europe. I think Roosevelt refused them entry and they got sent back.

1-00:26:49  
**Arielle:**  
Did you know about this incident at the time?

1-00:26:52  
**Jeanne:**  
No I didn't know about it at the time.

1-00:26:56  
**Arielle:**  
Could your family help at all with for Jews living in Europe or was there really nothing that you could
do as an American Jew?

1-00:27:08

Jeanne:
No, there was nothing.

1-00:27:12

Arielle:
How did it feel not really being able to help?

1-00:27:18

Jeanne:
Hard. Especially for my father. Actually his parents died right before, so they didn't see the horror that was going on. Thank goodness.

1-00:27:36

Arielle:
How did this experience shape you as a Jewish woman later in your life?

1-00:27:49

Jeanne:
Well I don't know. After I got married and I moved to Rhode Island, they were starting in Israel, when Israel was formed, I joined Pioneer Women, they are not in business anymore because they did what they were supposed to do at the time. I remember they had two groups in Rhode Island for the older women and the younger women. I was 26 at the time when I joined them. Their job was to teach women, especially in Yemen. You know, tried to modernize them because they were so backwards, and tried to teach them how to use the sewing machine and how to use the zipper and things like that. And, I don't know if they still have it, do they still have Kibbutz's in Israel?

1-00:29:12

Arielle:
Yep. Have you been to Israel since it was created?

1-00:29:19

Jeanne:
No, I've never been to Israel.

1-00:29:24

Arielle:
This is kind of a complicated question, but this is just to wrap up the interview for today. Do you consider yourself an American Jew or a Jewish American?

1-00:29:40

Jeanne:
An American Jew.

1-00:29:42

Arielle:
An American Jew? And why do you consider yourself that over a Jewish American.

1-00:29:51

**Jeanne:**
Oh, well I'm American first. And I love this country.

1-00:30:02

**Arielle:**
Okay, well I think that would wrap up for today.
Interview with Jeanne Wexler
Interviewed by: Arielle Carrick
Transcriber: Arielle Carrick
[Interview #2-November 22, 2012]

Arielle:
So I am here with Jeanne Wexler for the second part of the interview. We are going to talk about marriage and then work. Can you tell me when did you get married?

Jeanne:
June 24, 1950

Arielle:
And how old were you?

Jeanne:
I was almost 23. So 22.

Arielle:
And how did you meet your husband?

Jeanne:
I went with some girlfriends to Banor Lodge in CT for vacation and he was there too and he sat next to me at the table.

Arielle:
And you just hit it off?

Jeanne:
Even though he was the only male at the table there were like six females but I happened to sit next to him.

Arielle:
What was his name?

Jeanne:
Joe. Joe Wexler.
Arielle: And how long were you dating before you got married?

Jeanne: Well he came from Providence RI so he had to come to NY to see me. That was like 200 miles away. But he had an aunt in Manhatten. So he would come to see me and he would stay at his aunts house overnight. And we would go out to eat.

Arielle: Did you like being married so young?

Jeanne: In those days it was not so young. When I was 19 some of my aunts thinking I was an old maid.

Arielle: What did he do for work

Jeanne: Well he was in the army during WWII. He worked at Sheet Mell, like air conditioning. He worked for the navy department.

Arielle: So now we are going to get into your work. Did you work during World War II?

Jeanne: I was a teenager, I went to high school.

Arielle: Did you work while you were in school?

Jeanne: Yes.

Arielle: And where did you work?
I worked for Woolworth's. It was called a five and ten cents store. I worked after school on Thursday—they were open till 9:00 pm and I worked on Saturday.

2-00:02:40

Arielle:
Did you enjoy working there?

2-00:02:42

Jeanne:
Yeah I always liked to work.

2-00:02:45

Arielle:
Was that your only job throughout high school? Did you do any volunteer work?

2-00:02:50

Jeanne:
They did not have too many volunteers at the time. Although when I was in high school, I joined a club in high school called “Knittin' for Britain.” The girls there knitted squares and put them into a blanket and sent them to England when they were getting bombed. It was a pretty sad looking blanket.

2-00:03:23

Arielle:
What were the people that you worked with like? What kind of families did they come from?

2-00:03:33

Jeanne:
Well, my father had money, but I liked working. Most of them were kind of on the poor side.

2-00:03:42

Arielle:
Did you get along with the people you worked with?

2-00:03:44

Jeanne:
Oh yeah.

2-00:03:47

Arielle:
How far away was your job from where you lived?

2-00:03:52

Jeanne:
Well I had to get on the subway and that was about a half hour ride.

2-00:04:01

Arielle:
Were you in a union at all?
Jeanne: No.

Arielle: How did you feel about unions at the time even though you were not in one?

Jeanne: I didn't think at all about unions.

Arielle: And what did you do for work after the war?

Jeanne: Well after the war? I was always interested in fashion design. So I went to fashion design school for a year. I loved it. I loved every minute of it.

Arielle: Did you do work like that after school?

Jeanne: Well they had a placement service. And there were loads of little places that manufactured women's clothing. Now it is owned by large corporations. I loved it. The salary was next to nothing but I was an apprentice. It was really interesting they made the original garment in the place. And then when they got orders for it they used to send it to Pennsylvania after the orders to make the clothes. Now everything is made in China.

Arielle: When you were at home as a teenager during the war what did you do for fun?

Jeanne: I used to hang out with friends. I had a lot of friends. Sometimes on Sunday we would go to a Chinese restaurant for 50 cents you could get a chow mein meal.

Arielle: Did you see a lot of movies growing up?
Yes.

2-00:05:53
Arielle:
Did you notice any propaganda in the movies?

2-00:05:59
Jeanne:
No.

2-00:06:00
Arielle:
What kind of movies did you see?

2-00:06:04
Jeanne:
Everything practically. When I was a teenager in high school I was a Frank Sinatra nut. So we used to go into Manhattan into the New York Paramount and for like 75 cents you could see a good movie, you could see Sinatra at the same time and Benny Goodman, his orchestra. All at the same time, all this wonderful talent for 75 cents. You had to wait in this long line to get into the Paramount, we would get up at the crack of dawn to get in line. They would call those girls Barbie Soxers. Because they wore Barbie socks even in the winter, your feet turned blue but you still wore the Barbie socks.

2-00:07:00
Arielle:
You lived in New York which is obviously a big city. Did you notice a lot of people during the war moving into the cities from outside?

2-00:07:10
Jeanne:
No.

2-00:07:17
Arielle:
And you said you had a lot of Jewish people living in your community. How did the people that were not Jewish like the Jews?

2-00:07:25
Jeanne:
You know, out of all the people that went to my high school, I would say 95% of the kids there were Jewish. So I didn't know too many.

2-00:07:36
Arielle:
What about outside your high school? The people that were not Jewish, did they have any hatred or anti-semitism toward the Jews?
Jeanne: Not that I noticed, no.

Arielle: Did the Jews get along with the rest of the community? Last time you mentioned the Black and Polish community.

Jeanne: Oh that was when I was younger before my father bought the house. When he bought the house I went to Lincoln High school, because when I was in Junior high the neighborhood started to get bad with blacks moving in and we got robbed by Polish people. And so he didn't want me to go to that high school, that's why he bought the house. That high school was called Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson high school.

Arielle: And how old were you when you switched schools?

Jeanne: I just finished junior high. So what was I? About 13-14.

Arielle: Did you like your new school?

Jeanne: Yes I did. But I loved my Junior high in my old neighborhood because I had a lot of nice friends over there.

Arielle: Did you have a lot of Polish friends?

Jeanne: No.

Arielle: Did you have a lot of black friends?
No.

2-00:09:05

Arielle:
Were most of your friends Jewish?

2-00:09:07

Jeanne:
Yes.

2-00:09:08

Arielle:
Were there a lot of Catholics?

2-00:09:10

Jeanne:
No.

2-00:09:12

Arielle:
Okay now we are going to switch to after the war. How did you hear about the bombing in Japan? Do you remember how you heard about it?

2-00:09:21

Jeanne:
Radio. I always had the radio on, my father was a news buff and always had the radio on.

2-00:09:32

Arielle:
What do you remember feeling about the bombings? Did you agree with them or not agree with them?

2-00:09:39

Jeanne:
Are you talking about Europe or Japan?

2-00:09:41

Arielle:
Japan.

2-00:09:44

Jeanne:
I think we had to do it. They wouldn't surrender. No way. You couldn't sit down and talk to them because they wouldn't surrender and things really got bad. I figured it was either them or us and I would rather it be us. So we had to use the bomb, as bad as it was.

2-00:10:07

Arielle:
What do you remember hearing about D-Day in Europe?
Jeanne: Oh well I told you when the Japanese surrendered and that was the end of the war, and that day we went down to Times Square. There were about a million people there I went with some friends. And that famous photo with the sailor kissing the women, well everyone was kissing everyone over there.

Arielle: What do you remember hearing about Normandy in France?

Jeanne: It was a blood bath. I had a young cousin that was in the air force and the plane went down. He was only about 21.

Arielle: Do you remember hearing a lot about Normandy?

Jeanne: Not too much. I remember my aunt never got over his death. She got about $10,000 in insurance from the government when he died. She couldn't bring herself to use it, so she donated the $10,000 to get an ambulance for the Red Cross. I think there is a Veteran's Post named after him.

Arielle: Did you hear anything about the liberation of Jews from Auschwitz?

Jeanne: No, not much.

Arielle: It was not big news in the United States?

Jeanne: It was big news I guess.
Jeanne:  
No, although my father had relatives who they never heard of from again.

2-00:12:01

Arielle:  
How did the war experience affect the rest of your life?

2-00:12:10

Jeanne:  
Well I always hated war like most people. It never solved much of anything.

2-00:12:17

Arielle:  
I know a lot of people after the war held resentments toward Germans or Japanese. Did you ever find yourself having fears or resentments toward them?

2-00:12:30

Jeanne:  
Toward Germans, yes.

2-00:12:31

Arielle:  
What about toward Japanese?

2-00:12:34

Jeanne:  
Well yeah. To this day I would not buy a Toyota or a Japanese car. Or a German car. I only buy American cars. Right now I own a Ford.

2-00:12:51

Arielle:  
Did you do anything after the war because of your war experience at home. I know you said you joined Pioneer Women, did you do anything else similar to that because of the war.

2-00:13:05

Jeanne:  
No. Eventually I became President of Pioneer Women. But after Israel did very well on their own, they didn't need Pioneer Women anymore. That organization was disbanded. But I remember they once had a conference at the Statler (?) Hotel in New York for Pioneer Women and Eleanor Roosevelt, who was very pro-Israel she spoke at the conference. And I think a Prime Minister from Israel, Aber Imin, was there. A lot of famous people were there.

2-00:13:50

Arielle:  
Is there anything else you want to add? Anything that I didn't talk about?

2-00:13:55

Jeanne:
No.

2-00:13:57

Arielle:
Well I think that is everything. Thank you for your time.